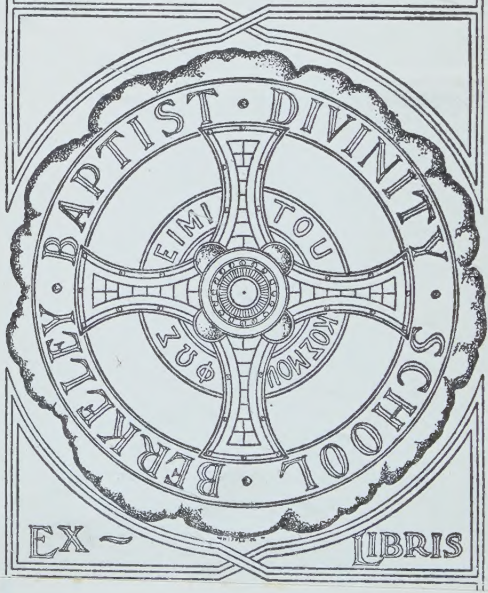
THE
SANDFORD FLEMING
LIBRARY



Gift of
Dr. Sandford Fleming

D. A. Steele

1874

from S. Patchen, Esq.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/lifeofrogerwilli0000will

MAS
W67
614

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1845, by
CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN,
in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts

PREFACE.

In preparing the following sketch of Roger Williams, the writer has consulted nearly all the works of New England history, from which materials might be derived for the illustration of his life and character. He is, however, by far the most indebted to the elaborate "Memoir," prepared by the late Mr. Knowles, a work of great fulness and accuracy of information respecting not only the immediate subject to which it relates, but also the general affairs of New England in that early age. This work, which probably contains all that can now be known concerning the life of the calumniated founder of Rhode Island, renders the task of a subsequent biographer comparatively easy. The narrative of Mr. Knowles has been generally compared with the original authorities on which he relies, and in all cases his statements have been found to be correct.

In selecting and arranging the materials, which are thus supplied, the aim of the present writer has been, to confine himself to

38292

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL

those which are best fitted to illustrate the personal character of this eminent man, and to furnish the means of estimating aright the services he rendered to his own and to subsequent times. He has sought to give a plain and faithful narrative of a series of events, which seem the more remarkable, as, by the lapse of time, we are further separated from the period in which they occurred. These events, indeed, furnish a sad and perplexing commentary upon the principles of the Puritans, while they serve to impart the aspect of heroism to the life of him, whom the Puritans persecuted and banished. They are now well understood, and are regarded as, in some sense, among the anomalies of history; yet they can never lose their interest and importance. So long as men shall continue to differ on religious subjects, and require the exercise of Christian charity and liberality, so long may they learn lessons of the highest practical value from the life of him, who has been justly styled "the apostle of religious liberty."

CONTENTS.

LIFE OF ROGER WILLIAMS.

BY WILLIAM GAMMELL.

Page.

Preface. 3

CHAPTER I.

His early Life. — His Education. — The Influences that formed his Character and Opinions. — He arrives at Boston. 5

CHAPTER II.

The Puritan Settlements in Massachusetts. — The Principles on which they were founded. — The Views of Williams. — The Charges of the Magistrates against him. — His Settlement at Salem. — His Removal to Plymouth, and the Cause. 12

CHAPTER III.

His Reception at Plymouth. — His Discontent there, and Return to Salem. — Results of his Residence at Plymouth. — The Puritans' Dread of Anabaptists. 21

CHAPTER IV.

His second Residence in Salem. — His Disapprobation of the Ministers' Meeting. — Treatise concerning the King's Patent. — Troubles with the Magistrates on Account of it. — Conduct of Williams. — He preaches upon the Duty of Women's wearing Veils. — Also against the Cross in the Military Colors. — His Character and Standing in Salem. . . 28

CHAPTER V.

His Doctrine of the Freedom of Conscience. — The Difficulty in which it involves him with the Clergy and Magistrates. — His Opposition to the Freeman's Oath. — The Persecution of the Magistrates extends to the People of Salem. — He is deserted by his Church. — The Judgment of the Clergy. — The Decree of Banishment. — He leaves Salem. . 38

CHAPTER VI.

His Wanderings after his Banishment. — He visits Massasoit, and begins a Settlement at Seekonk. — He crosses the River, and lays the Foundations of Providence. 54

CHAPTER VII.

The principal Indian Tribes of New England. — Williams's Intercourse with them. — His

Views of their Rights, and his Influence with them. — Freedom of the Colony at Providence. — Its Government limited to civil Things. — Circumstances in which Williams is placed. . 65

CHAPTER VIII.

The Pequot War. — The Services Williams renders the Government of Massachusetts. — His Agency saves the Colonies from Destruction. — His Letter to Governor Winthrop. — Issue of the War. — Manner in which his Services are regarded by Massachusetts. 79

CHAPTER IX.

Inadequacy of Legislation for the Suppression of Heresy. — Account of Mrs. Hutchinson and her Controversy in Massachusetts. — Her Adherents are received at Providence. — They settle on Rhode Island. — Williams's Agency in the Purchase of the Island. — Relations of the Colony at Providence with Massachusetts. — Account of Samuel Gorton. — His Settlement at Pawtuxet. — His Difficulties with the People of Providence. 94

CHAPTER X.

The New England Confederacy. — The Colonies in Rhode Island excluded. — They appeal to the King. — Williams is appointed their Agent, and sails for England. — Obtains a Charter. — Publishes the Bloody Tenet. —

He returns to Rhode Island with the Charter. — His Reception at Providence. — His Pacification of the Indians. — Organization of a Government under the Charter. — Spirit of its early Legislation. 113

CHAPTER XI.

Private Life of Williams. — Dissensions in Rhode Island. — Coddington's Commission. — Oppressive Policy of the United Colonies. — Treatment of John Clarke and others in Massachusetts. — Dissatisfaction with Coddington. — Williams and Clarke are appointed Agents of the Colony. — They sail for England. . 130

CHAPTER XII.

State of public Affairs in England. — Williams's Occupations while there. — Coddington's Commission revoked. — Letter of the General Assembly to Williams. — His Intercourse with Sir Henry Vane, Cromwell, and Milton. — His literary Labors. — His Return to Providence. — Reorganization of the Government. — He is elected President of the Colony. . . . 144

CHAPTER XIII.

Character of his Administration. — He acts as Mediator between the United Colonies and the Indians. — Spirit of Disorder in the Colony. — Williams's Letter to the Town of Providence. — Conduct of William Harris. — Wil-

liams attempts to conciliate the other Colonies. — Their Efforts to compel Rhode Island to persecute the Quakers. — Her liberal Policy towards them. 160

CHAPTER XIV.

He retires from the Presidency. — Charles the Second grants a new Charter to the Colony — Williams appointed an Assistant in the Government. — His Labors for the Indians. — His Controversy with the Quakers. — King Philip's War. — The Services of Williams during the War. — Its Results. — The Close of his Life, and his Death. 178

CHAPTER XV.

His religious Opinions. — His Views respecting the Clergy. — Political Opinions. — Character as a Writer. — General Remarks. 197

APPENDIX.

No. I. — *Charges against Rhode Island.* . . . 209
No. II. — *Account of Roger Williams's Writings.* 212

LIFE

OF

ROGER WILLIAMS,

BY

WILLIAM GAMMELL.

ROGER WILLIAMS.

CHAPTER I.

His early Life. — His Education. — The Influences that formed his Character and Opinions. — He arrives at Boston.

Our only knowledge of the life of Roger Williams, previous to his arrival in America, is derived from tradition; and even this tradition rests upon no very certain evidence. No allusion is found in his writings, nor has any trace of documentary history been discovered, which can guide us to definite information concerning this period of his life. His peculiarities of opinion, and his subsequent exclusion from the sympathies of the colonies, undoubtedly contributed to render the interest of the early annalists of New England, in his personal history, far less than in that of most of the other leading men of his time. Not one of them appears to have taken any pains to inquire into his origin, or to

preserve, for the gratification of posterity, any account of his life and fortunes while living in Great Britain.

According to the traditions which have been preserved concerning him, he was born in Wales, in the year 1599. His parents were in the middle ranks of life, but of the character and circumstances of his family, or of the place of his birth, nothing can now be ascertained. He is said to have received his education at the university of Oxford, under the patronage of Sir Edward Coke, whose interest in him was first excited by an incident, which may have been characteristic of the early bias of his mind. He was struck with the young man's appearance at church, and his devout attention during public worship, and one day found that he was taking notes of the sermon. Sir Edward afterwards sent for him, and became so well pleased with his talents and character, that he obtained permission of his parents to place him at one of the colleges at Oxford. His name, however, cannot now be found on any of the rolls of the university, and, from the fact that Sir Edward Coke was himself a graduate of Cambridge, it has been doubted whether Williams did not also receive his education at the same seat of learning.

The whole of the tradition relating to the

patronage of Sir Edward Coke may well be called in question; for, at best, it rests upon no very satisfactory foundation. It is certain, however, from his own statements, as well as from the character of his writings, that Mr. Williams received a classical education, and it is in a very high degree probable, that he pursued his studies at one of the famous seats of learning, which, until a recent period, have given to England nearly all her educated men. After the close of his residence at the university, he is said to have commenced the study of the law, under the guidance of his illustrious patron; but his inclinations, which were early subjected to the influence of strong religious feelings, led him soon to abandon this pursuit, and enter upon the study of theology. This was a study, which largely engrossed the minds of most of the educated men of that age, and to which the growth and culture of his own spiritual nature had already given him a decided and controlling bias. "From my childhood," says he, near the close of his life, "now above threescore years, the Father of lights and mercies touched my soul with a love to himself, to his only-begotten, the true Lord Jesus, and to his Holy Scriptures." The religious character, whose germs were thus early planted, grew and ripened with his years, amidst the retirement of his secluded studies,

and bore fruits in a life of piety and virtue, which won for him the respect and confidence of those with whom he was associated. His mind was enriched and expanded with the best learning of the age; and it is probable, that his preparation for the sacred profession to which he was looking forward, was, for the time, unusually thorough and complete. He was admitted to orders in the established church, though it is not known by what bishop, or in what year, he was ordained. It is also said, that he was appointed to the charge of a parish, while in England; but of this no mention whatever is made in his writings, which now exist.

But, though so little can now be ascertained concerning his personal career in early life, yet the history of that troubled and exciting period of English affairs enables us to form no doubtful estimate of the influences that lent their aid in forming his opinions and shaping his character. He had grown to manhood at a time when society in England was in one of those transition states, which mark the departure of an old and the forming of a new era. The principles of the reformation, which had first been preached in England by Wickliffe and his followers, were slowly and silently working out their legitimate results in the institutions both of the church and the state, not less than in the

minds of the people. Their influence was resisted by the prerogative of the monarch and the power of the hierarchy, and the rites of a corrupted church were still imposed, by statutes of uniformity, upon the free consciences of Englishmen. The great contest, which had commenced with the reformation, between the worn-out forms of a preceding age and the principles of civil and religious freedom, was at that time waged with unabated zeal. It is evident, from numerous passages in his subsequent writings, that Roger Williams, while in England, was no indifferent spectator of the events which marked the age. Into the controversy which then divided the English church, he had undoubtedly thrown himself with all the energy of his ardent and sanguine temperament. He had thoroughly studied the principles at issue between the two parties, and, with no wavering faith, had embraced the tenets of the persecuted Puritans, who then constituted the most pious portion of the established church. He thus became the associate and friend of Cotton and Hooker, and seems to have had occasional intercourse with Vane and Cromwell.

But, in addition to the views which he held in common with these and other eminent Puritans of his time, the lessons of history, and the workings of his clear and far-seeing mind, had

forced upon his conviction another principle, which, even before he left his native country, had settled itself firmly in his faith. This principle was the inalienable freedom of the conscience, the responsibility of man to God alone in all matters of religious belief and worship. It had been held, and occasionally asserted, in some modified form, by the friends of freedom in a former age, and was, indeed, a legitimate result of the spirit and doctrines of the reformation; but in the mind of Roger Williams alone, in modern times, does it appear to have been first conceived in the length and breadth of its universal application.

Holding such views, it is not surprising that he should have been among the earliest to join the bands of emigrants, who were preparing to seek an asylum for their persecuted worship upon the shores of New England. Some of his acquaintances had already preceded him to the new world, while the Puritans, in every part of England, were looking with anxious interest to the colonies, which had thus been planted beyond the sea. Yielding to the general impulse which then so widely prevailed, he embarked at Bristol, on the 1st of December, 1630, in the ship *Lion*, Captain Pierce, master, (the same ship, which, in successive passages, bore so many of the emigrants to New England,) and, after a

tempestuous voyage of sixty-six days, arrived at Boston, on the 5th of February, 1631.

He was now in the thirty-second year of his age, and in the full maturity of all his powers, having already acquired a reputation for eloquence and piety, which had spread widely in England, and had preceded him to America. His arrival at Boston is mentioned by Governor Winthrop, in his Journal, as of "a godly minister," and was doubtless hailed, by the churches of the infant settlements of Massachusetts Bay, as an accession to their strength of the precious gifts of piety and learning. They little anticipated the startling doctrines he would put forth; and he had no intimation of the singular destiny, that was preparing for him, amid the unknown wilderness to which he had come.

When he embarked at Bristol, he had been recently married, and was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Mary Williams, a lady, who lived to share his changeful fortunes among the checkered scenes through which he subsequently passed, but of whose early history even less is known than of that of her husband.

CHAPTER II.

The Puritan Settlements in Massachusetts. — The Principles on which they were founded. — The Views of Williams. — The Charges of the Magistrates against him. — His Settlement at Salem. — His Removal to Plymouth, and the Cause.

The settlements composing the colony of Massachusetts Bay were established in the year 1628, and the two years following. The first company of emigrants settled at Salem in 1628, and was under the direction of the enterprising and fearless Endicott. In the year 1630, there arrived in the bay another band of Pilgrims, who, like their brethren of Plymouth, had already organized a commonwealth, and elected their officers, under a charter from the King, which henceforth was to be administered within the territory of the colony, of whose existence and rights it contained the guaranty. This company was by far the most wealthy and most cultivated of all the bands of emigrants, who had yet arrived in New England. There were among its members men of large hereditary fortune, and of gentle blood; scholars versed in all the learning of the times; civilians long

practised in the study of public affairs; and clergymen whose learning and piety had won the highest respect of their parishes in England At the head of all was Winthrop, whom they had chosen Governor, a man of the noblest virtues, whose warm enthusiasm was tempered by mild and gentle benevolence, and whose bland and high-bred manners were fitted to command the love and respect of his associates, and, even amidst the privations of the wilderness, to throw an air of dignity and a charm of propriety over every scene of life upon which he entered.

We may well pause, for a moment, to consider the principles which the fathers of Massachusetts had incorporated into their commonwealth, and upon which they had erected the fabric of their society. It is a mistake, as has often been remarked, to suppose that they came to New England with any notions of unlimited freedom of conscience. It was no part of their aim, in bidding farewell to their native island, to build, across the ocean, an asylum for the persecuted of every name. Even the possibility of such a state of society had never dawned upon their minds. "The emigrants," as has justly been said, "were a body of sincere believers, desiring purity of religion, not a colony of philosophers, bent upon universal toleration." They

had come to "this outside of the world," as they deemed it, to enjoy, unmolested, their own worship, and to practise, without hinderance or restraint, the principles of their own faith. They were generally members of the established church of England, but desired that the principles of the reformation should be applied still more thoroughly to purify her doctrines, and elevate and spiritualize her worship. It was to escape oppression for themselves, not to secure the boon of freedom to others; to carry into practice their own views of Christian worship, and their own doctrines of civil liberty, not to open a temple for the disciples of every faith and the adherents of every creed; that they had braved the ocean and the wilderness, and begun to plant their civil and religious institutions beneath these unpropitious skies.

To secure the accomplishment of this object, the dearest which their hearts could cherish, all their legislation was designed, and all the arrangements of their society were framed. It was in accordance with this, that they reserved to themselves the right of admitting only whom they pleased as freemen of the colony; and within a little more than a year after their arrival, they "ordered and agreed that, for time to come, no man should be admitted to the freedom of the body politic, but such as are members of some

of the churches within the limits of the same." It was the aspiration of the Puritans to form a Christian republic, after the model of the Jewish theocracy, in which the laws of Moses should constitute the rules of civil life. Their system, thus educed from the highest sources of authority, tolerated no contradiction and allowed of no dissent. The mandates of public sentiment, not less than the enactments of the General Court, in the infant colony, were as stern and unyielding as had been the statutes of uniformity, from whose tyrannical operation they had fled when they embarked for the shores of the new world. Wrapped in their singular and somewhat original social system there lay the germs both of immense good and immense evil; of a moral energy that was to bless the world by the results it has produced, and of dissensions that were to rend their youthful republic, and kindle the fires of intolerance and fanaticism even upon the spots most sacred to freedom.

Such were the principles on which the colony of Massachusetts Bay had been founded, and such was its spirit during the first year of its existence, in the course of which Roger Williams landed upon its shores, and became one of its residents. Like the colonists who had preceded him, he had come hither for conscience' sake, to find, for the profession and the practice

of his religious faith, a freedom which England had refused to grant. Here, then, we may well suppose, Mr. Williams had expected to realize the visions of his imagination, and find a state of society in which he could cherish and express the great doctrines which had taken full possession of his soul. He was among those with whom, in the essential points of Christian faith and morals, he entirely agreed. In the applications of his great principle of the freedom of conscience, however, there were constantly presented occasions of infinite disagreement.

Scarcely had he stepped ashore at Boston, when he found the whole civil and ecclesiastical authorities of Massachusetts arrayed in hostility against him. In the asylum of the exiled Puritans, intolerance had also found a home. The same odious principle, which, by uniting the church with the civil power, had given rise to all the persecutions, that, during three centuries, had stained the soil of England with martyrs' blood, and driven into exile some of the master-spirits of her people, was also incorporated into the society of the New England Pilgrims. Its form and aspect, indeed, were changed, but its spirit was still the same. Its action was chastened by the straitened circumstances of exile, and of an infant state; but it still authorized the civil magistrate to watch over the opin

ions of men, to punish for errors of doctrine, and for neglect of religious duties, and was destined, by its subsequent applications, to destroy the harmony and quiet of the New England colonies, and to fix upon the escutcheon of some of them the foulest stains.

A few weeks after his arrival, Mr. Williams was invited by the church at Salem to become assistant to their pastor, the Reverend Mr. Skelton; but the magistrates of the colony had heard of his opinions, and immediately interposed their remonstrances with the people of Salem to prevent his settlement. The reasons of this interference on the part of the authorities, as alleged in the letter, which they addressed to the church at Salem, are, first, that Mr. Williams had refused to join with the congregation at Boston, because they would not declare their repentance for having had communion with the churches of England while they lived there; secondly, that he "had declared his opinion, that the magistrate might not punish a breach of the Sabbath, nor any other offence that was a breach of the first table."

With respect to the former of these charges, it is difficult now to determine, precisely, how much importance he attached to the sin of which he thus called the Boston church to declare their repentance. It is, however, certain that

he was not alone in thinking the Puritans had done wrong in holding communion with those whose power and resources were constantly employed in crushing the spirit of true piety in England. It was, in his estimation, allowing a compromise with sin. It was lending an indirect sanction and connivance to a church, whose usages he deemed corrupt, and whose government he regarded as tyranny. Whatever views may now be entertained of this sentiment, it will scarcely be pretended that it furnished any ground for the magistrates to prevent the settlement of Mr. Williams in the ministry to which he had been ordained, and to which he was now called by the suffrages of the church in Salem.

The second of the above charges, it will be seen, relates to his declaration of the great doctrine, to the vindication and elucidation of which he was to devote his life. His doctrine was in direct conflict with both the opinions and the practices of the colony of Massachusetts, whose counsellors and elders considered themselves the appointed guardians of the orthodoxy of the people; and in that age they could conceive of no other mode of executing their trust, than by inflicting civil penalties upon every one who ventured to dissent even in the most unimportant particulars from the prevailing faith. The opinion of Roger Williams, which was then urged

in proof of his unsuitableness to become a minister of the gospel, has long since become the common sentiment of the American people, and is fast spreading itself over the civilized world, everywhere, in its course, giving peace to the distracted elements of society, and placing on a sure basis the institutions both of government and religion.

Mr. Williams, however, had already removed to Salem, where, on the 12th of April, 1631, he was settled as a minister of the church, notwithstanding the opposition of the magistrates, who at the time were assembled at Boston. On the 18th of the following May, after having been duly propounded, he was admitted a freeman of the colony, and took the usual oath of allegiance prescribed in such cases. He was now, in the fullest sense of the word, a citizen of the colony, and one of the ministers of its oldest church. He had thus identified himself with its interests by the most significant acts which a citizen can perform, and was doubtless as ready to labor in its service, and to share its burdens, as any of those who had been appointed to preside over its affairs. The people of Salem had extended to him their confidence, and his life and ministry there had confirmed their respect and attachment, and were giving promise

of a long career, as their guide, and teacher, and friend.

But his settlement here was destined to be brought to an early close. The act of the church in calling him to be their minister, contrary to the advice of the Governor and General Court, had awakened the stern displeasure of those functionaries, and was not easily forgiven. His own opinions, also, which he had taken no pains to disguise, had excited the suspicions of the magistrates and elders of the colony; and, true to their united trust, as the guardians of the popular faith, they did not allow him to remain in peace at a post to which he had been invited in disregard of their wishes and advice. For the sake of private opinions, therefore, which did not in the least affect his relations to the civil power, as a citizen, he and his church were continually harassed and disturbed. At length, after the lapse of a few months, as is thought, at the close of the summer, he removed from Salem, and sought a residence in the colony of Plymouth, beyond the persecuting jurisdiction of the Court of Massachusetts Bay. This removal was undoubtedly dictated by prudence and a desire for peace and quiet, and was not the result of his own independent choice; for in the venerable pastor, and among the people of Salem,

he had found friends, whose interests in his ministry, respect for his character, and attention to his welfare, had enlisted in their behalf his warmest feelings of regard, which he long continued to cherish.

CHAPTER III.

His Reception at Plymouth. — His Discontent there, and Return to Salem. — Results of his Residence at Plymouth. — The Puritans' Dread of Anabaptists.

Mr. Williams removed to Plymouth probably in the month of August, 1631. He was received there with the respect which his reputation as a minister, and his high personal character, were so well calculated to call forth. He was entertained by the Governor and the leading citizens, and after some time, having been admitted to the church, was settled as assistant to the pastor, the Reverend Ralph Smith. The Puritans who had come over in the *Mayflower*, and settled at Plymouth, had, from the first, manifested a more liberal spirit than their neighbors, who had subsequently settled in the Bay.

Before they embarked upon their perilous voy age, they had resided for some time in Holland, and become entirely alienated from the established church of England. It is probable that, on this account, the views of Roger Williams, concerning the propriety of holding communion with that church, were, to say the least, less offensive to them than to their brethren of Massachusetts. However this may have been, they seem to have been ready to receive him among them with the most cordial fellowship, and with more than usual attention and respect. Governor Bradford says his teaching was "well approved, for the benefit whereof," he adds, "I shall bless God, and am thankful to him ever for his sharpest admonitions and reproofs, so far as they agreed with truth."

But though he had now fixed his residence beyond the jurisdiction of the Court of Massachusetts, he had not removed from the reach of that disposition which displays itself in every age, and in all conditions of society, to distrust and annoy those who are in advance of prevailing opinions, or at variance with existing institutions. It is the usual destiny of such men to be misunderstood and suspected by their contemporaries, and often to be proscribed as the enemies of the state, even while they are studiously cherishing its dearest interests. Thus

was it with Roger Williams at Plymouth. His sentiments of freedom, and his earnest declaration of the rights of the soul, though they seem never to have provoked the action either of the church or of the civil authorities, were not long in awakening the suspicions of the principal men of the colony. It is probable, also, that many were the more ready to detect the heresy that lurked in his views on this subject, from a sympathy with their brethren of the neighboring colony, and a knowledge of the reputation he had acquired as the advocate of a dangerous freedom while resident at Boston and Salem. So faithful, however, was his preaching, so exemplary and beneficent was his daily life, that he retained the affections and respect of the people, even while many of them were distrustful of the liberal principles, which he promulgated. His own feelings, however, were never so strongly enlisted in the people of Plymouth, as they had been in those of the town where he had first been settled as a minister of the gospel. It may be, indeed, that he had never regarded his removal to Plymouth as anything more than a temporary retirement from the storm of an excited and virulent public sentiment in the sister colony. His heart still turned to Salem, and longed to renew the hopes and the interests with which he had first entered upon

his ministry there; and, accordingly, after an absence of about two years, on receiving an invitation from the people of that town to resume his place among them, he left Plymouth in the month of August of the year 1633.

His residence at Plymouth, brief though it was, had yet been marked by incidents of no inconsiderable importance in their bearing upon his subsequent career and destiny. It was here, that his first child was born, a daughter, who received her mother's name, and, we may naturally suppose, constituted another most tender tie, that bound him to his family and his home. But the most important among the incidents of his life at Plymouth were the intercourse he held, and the friendly intimacy he formed, with some of the most celebrated chiefs of the various Indian tribes, who came to promote alliance and prosecute trade with the colonists of New England. Here he won the regard of the venerable Massasoit, the father of King Philip, and chief of the Wampanoags, who, from the seat of his royal race at Mount Hope, had often gone to brighten, by friendly intercourse, the chain that bound him to his early allies. Here, too, he conversed with the Narragansett warriors, whose stern chiefs, the aged and wise Canonicus, and the fierce though generous Miantonomo, had broken through the shyness of savage life, and sought to conciliate

the favor of their new neighbors. It is probable, also, that, at this period of his life, he made excursions into the domains of these wild warriors, and, in the rude cabins of the natives, studied their strange characters and their manner of life, and acquired the rudiments of their uncouth language. In a letter written many years afterwards, he says, "God was pleased to give me a painful, patient spirit, to lodge with them in their filthy, smoky holes, even while I lived at Plymouth and Salem, to gain their tongue." The knowledge which he thus acquired, and the friendships with the chiefs which he thus cemented, proved of incalculable advantage to him, in the days when he was driven forth an exile from the homes of civilized men, to wander in the wintry forest, and seek, in the comfortless dwellings of the heathen, the protection and the charities which Christians had denied to him.

It is probable, also, that this acquaintance with the Indians served to call his attention more particularly to their moral condition, and to enlist his earliest interest in their religious instruction, and their conversion to Christianity. "My soul's desire," says he, "was to do the natives good;" and his whole life, passed amidst the perils and privations of the wilderness, and in deeds of justice

and beneficence to its rude dwellers, proves the sincerity of his desire.

At the time when Mr. Williams asked a dismission from the church at Plymouth, many of its members sought to dissuade him from his design of removing from the colony, and were reluctant to grant his request. He was, at length, however, dismissed, at the instance of Mr. Brewster, the ruling elder, who, probably, disliking his views, urged upon the church that he held dangerous opinions, and was even tainted with the heresy of Anabaptism; and, if he remained among them, "might run the same course of rigid separation and Anabaptistry" as had a "Sebaptist" of the name of John Smyth, whom they had known in Holland.

Of all the forms of heresy known in that age, none, save Papacy alone, seems to have been so frightful to the imagination of the Puritans as Anabaptism; a term which defined, in some vague manner, the views of a sect who baptized again those who united with them from other denominations. A portion of those connected with this sect in Germany, about the middle of the sixteenth century, embracing the doctrines of civil freedom, and led on by demagogues and fanatics, had united with Catholics and Lutherans in a fierce and sanguinary contest against

their feudal masters, and waged for years the furious strife known as the Rustic War. So determined were their bravery and perseverance, and so wide-spread was the dismay which their fanatical insurrection had caused, that their supposed tenets and character had come to be regarded with horror throughout the Christian world. They had always contended most strenuously against all prescriptive right, whether of priest or of king; and the doctrines of republican liberty, and of individual independence, which they associated with their religious faith, were generally regarded, in that age when the divine right of kings had scarcely been questioned, as the germs of every species of anarchy and disorder.

The very mention of the name of Anabaptism called up a train of phantoms, that never failed to excite the apprehensions of the early Puritans. Hence it was, that when Mr. Brewster suggested even the remotest association of Roger Williams with this heresy, the church at Plymouth were easily induced to grant the dismission which he had requested. A considerable number of its members, however, who had become attached to his ministry, were also dismissed at the same time, and removed with him to Salem.

CHAPTER IV.

His second Residence in Salem. — His Disapprobation of the Ministers' Meeting. — Treatise concerning the King's Patent. — Troubles with the Magistrates on Account of it. — Conduct of Williams. — He preaches upon the Duty of Women's wearing Veils. — Also against the Cross in the Military Colors. — His Character and Standing in Salem.

The early historians of the colony of Massachusetts Bay have displayed far greater zeal in setting forth the errors of doctrine imputed to Roger Williams, than in framing any connected narrative of the events with which he was so intimately associated. They have with one accord been eager to vindicate the proceedings of the magistrates against him, but seem never to have imagined that so troublesome a person would ever become an object of interest to posterity, and still less that his most offensive principles would ever be regarded as the birthright of humanity. Hence there is a singular confusion of dates in the accounts, which have been given of his second residence in Salem; and, in narrating the events of this important period of his life, we cannot always be sure that we are fol-

lowing the order of time, or pursuing the permanent relations of historical cause and effect.

Mr. Williams probably returned to Salem, as has already been mentioned, in the latter part of August of the year 1633. He resided there a year after his removal from Plymouth, exercising his ministry "by way of prophecy," as it was termed, before he was settled as pastor of the church. This event took place on the death of his aged friend, Mr. Skelton, in the summer of 1634. During this year, however, he was often harassed by the magistrates and elders of the colony, and was more than once summoned before the General Court to answer for his opinions.

Soon after his return to Salem, we find him joining with his associate in the church, the Reverend Mr. Skelton, in calling in question the expediency of a meeting of ministers, which had been established in the colony for the discussion of questions in theology, and for other similar purposes of mutual improvement. The ground of the exception thus taken by the Salem ministers is alleged by Governor Winthrop to have been, a fear "that it might grow, in time, to a presbytery, or superintendency, to the prejudice of the churches' liberties." This apprehension indicates a mind jealous of the interests of liberty, and, perhaps, somewhat inclined to mag-

nify the perils to which it is always exposed from clerical or ecclesiastical associations. The apprehension was undoubtedly groundless; yet it will scarcely be denied, that it was the natural result of an experience such as that of Roger Williams had been, both in England and the colonies. It served to strengthen, and call forth more fully, the suspicions of his orthodoxy, which had already been awakened in the minds of the clergy, and was doubtless one in the long train of circumstances, that led on the proceedings against him.

But it was not alone in trifling matters like this, that the suspicious vigilance of the magistrates and the elders found occasions on which to display itself. The workings of his free and fearless mind soon gave cause for more serious offence. During his residence at Plymouth, he had drawn up and presented to the Governor and Council of that colony, a treatise on the nature of the right claimed by the monarchs of the several nations of Christendom to dispose of the countries of barbarous tribes, by virtue of discovery. In this treatise, says Governor Winthrop, "among other things, he disputed their right to the land they possessed, and concluded, that, claiming by the King's grant, they could have no title, nor otherwise, except they compounded with the natives." The offensive

manuscript, though it had never been published, and was not even written in Massachusetts, he was yet required to deliver to the Governor for examination; and, as was usual in all the important proceedings of the colonial government, the advice of the ministers was taken, and he was ordered to appear at the next Court, to receive censure. In the treatise he had written, there were, the Governor proceeds to say, "three passages whereat they were much offended. First, for that he chargeth King James to have told a solemn public lie, because in his patent he blessed God, that he was the first Christian prince that discovered this land. Secondly, for that he chargeth him and others with blasphemy, for calling Europe Christendom, or the Christian world. Thirdly, for that he did personally apply to our present King Charles, these three places in the Revelations, viz."—The passages themselves, unfortunately for the reader's curiosity, the Governor has failed to mention.

This treatise, if it was ever published, has not been preserved; and the only account, which has been given of it, let it be remembered, is that of the very magistrate by whom it was required for examination. But, taking even the version thus furnished, which, on the very best construction, is liable to savor, in some degree, at least, of an *ex parte* statement,

the act of the General Court can be regarded as nothing less than a despotic exercise of absolute power. It demanded from the privacy of his own desk an unpublished manuscript, which he had written within another jurisdiction, on a great subject of abstract right and of natural law, and summoned him to appear and receive censure for the opinions it contained. Why these opinions should have been thus offensive to the fathers of Massachusetts, it is now by no means easy to determine. They did not essentially differ from the practice of the early colonists, who, in all cases, made some remuneration to the natives for the lands which they occupied; nor were they at all at variance with the original instructions given by the British cabinet to Endicott and the settlers at Salem. The language of these instructions was, "If any of the salvages pretend right of inheritance to all, or any part of the lands granted in our patent, we pray you endeavor to purchase their tytle, that we may avoid the least scruple of intrusion." * The great principle of natural right on which those practices and instructions were founded, had presented itself with surprising clearness to the mind of Roger Williams, and he fearlessly accepted the conclusions to which

* Bancroft, Vol. I. p. 346.

it conducted him. So strongly had they taken possession of his mind, that he addressed a letter to the King himself, as he says, "not without the approbation of some of the chiefs of New England, then tender also upon this point before God," "humbly acknowledging the evil of that part of the patent, which respects the donation of land."*

Had these opinions proceeded from a different source, or been advocated with less clearness and boldness, it is probable they might have given less offence to the magistrates, and occasioned their author far less trouble. But, coming from one who was already an object of suspicion, and calling in question, as they plainly did, the principle of the King's patents, they seemed, both to the Court and the clergy, to be the expressions alike of heresy and sedition. It was, undoubtedly, on this account, that the Court, who in this, as in other instances, extended their jurisdiction over the opinions as well as the actions of the people, thus arbitrarily summoned him to appear before them and receive censure.

The conduct of Mr. Williams, under this harassing treatment of the authorities, was such as reflects the highest honor both upon the

* Reply to Mr. Cotton, p. 277

firmness and clearness of his understanding, and upon the feelings of his heart. He complied with the orders of the Court, odious and offensive to his sense of right as they must have been, and wrote letters to the magistrates, alleging that his treatise had been written "only for the private satisfaction of the Governor of Plymouth;" and, with expressions of penitence, if he had committed any wrong, and of loyalty to the King, though without renouncing his opinions, he submissively offered the manuscript to be burned. He has often been charged with obstinacy and troublesome pertinacity; but, in this case, for once at least, he displayed a spirit entirely the reverse, and which seems to have surprised and subdued even his bitterest persecutors; for, says the historian, "they found the matters not to be so evil as at first they seemed." Thus were his firm adherence to the principles of justice, and the clear convictions of his reason, mellowed with the mild spirit of Christian forbearance; and thus, even amidst oppression and outrage, did he manifest that sublime charity which thinketh no evil, which suffereth long, and is kind.

It is not essential to the ends of this memoir to attempt even a sketch of any of the numerous public disputes that so often and so deeply agitated that age of controversy. Their

history is a melancholy record of the struggles, and bigotry, and strife, through which our New England society was made to pass, before it emerged into the universal tolerance, the quiet repose, the friendly association, of the different forms of religious faith, which now characterize our happy communities. With but few of these was Roger Williams, in any manner, particularly connected. During his second residence at Salem, he is said to have preached to his congregation upon the duty of women to wear veils in all public assemblies, a question which appears to have been quite seriously discussed among the ministers of the colony. The doctrine was controverted by Mr. Cotton, who, happening to preach at Salem while the question was occupying public attention, showed, to the satisfaction of his hearers, that the custom "had no sufficient foundation in Scripture." The introduction of such topics into the pulpit was by no means confined to Roger Williams; for, in those days, the minister was in the habit of discussing, in his sermons, every topic of legislation and of manners, as well as of morals and religion. John Eliot, the noble-minded apostle to the Indians, and President Chauncy, the head of Harvard College, preached earnest and learned discourses on the practice of wearing wigs; and, in 1649, the whole body

of the magistrates, with Endicott at their head, signed a solemn protest against the custom of men's wearing long hair, and requested the clergy to preach against it, "as a thing uncivil and unmanly, whereby men do deform themselves, and offend sober and modest men, and do corrupt good manners."*

In another of the ephemeral controversies of the day, Mr. Williams appears to have taken a larger share. The military ensign then established as the colors of the several regiments of the English army, contained, among its devices, the sign of the cross. Williams delivered a discourse on the unlawfulness of all ceremonies and symbols, which had been borrowed from the service of idolatry, or of Popery, on the ground that their use tended to lead men back to superstition and false religion. In accordance with this doctrine, which, indeed, was one of the favorite principles of the Puritans, Mr. Endicott, one of the magistrates of Salem, ordered the cross to be cut out of the colors; an act which, in some of its features, bore the appearance of treason against the King, and which, for a time, was productive of no little strife among the disputatious colonists of the Bay. The matter was referred to the Governor

* Hutchinson's *Hist. of Mass.* Vol. I. p. 143.

and the General Court, and stirred deeply the fountains of public sentiment, and was at length settled only by a species of compromise, by leaving the odious symbol out of the colors of the companies in the colony, and retaining it in the flag of the castle, and in those of the shipping in the harbor.

The incidents narrated above occurred during the period in which Mr. Williams had been performing the duties of a minister in Salem, in the capacity of assistant to the pastor of the church. By the assiduity and faithfulness with which he had discharged these duties, and the character he had ever maintained in the community, he won for his ministry the respect of the people, and attained to high standing and influence, both as a clergyman and a citizen. Accordingly, on the death of Mr. Skelton, he was invited by the church to become their teacher. Against this invitation, as against that which had been given him on a former occasion, the Court sent their decided remonstrance, and requested the church at Salem not to ordain him. The church, however, with a becoming independence, disregarded the remonstrance, and Mr. Williams was regularly instituted in the pastoral office in August, 1634. This act was regarded by the Court as a high handed contempt of their authority, which was

not soon forgiven, and, as a subsequent chapter will show, was at length punished in a most remarkable and characteristic manner.

CHAPTER V.

His Doctrine of the Freedom of Conscience. — The Difficulty in which it involves him with the Clergy and Magistrates. — His Opposition to the Freeman's Oath. — The Persecution of the Magistrates extends to the People of Salem. — He is deserted by his Church. — The Judgment of the Clergy. — The Decree of Banishment. — He leaves Salem.

From the period of Mr. Williams's final settlement as the teacher of the church in Salem, may be dated the beginning of the controversy with the clergy and Court of Massachusetts, which, at length, terminated in his banishment from the colony. He was surrounded by men, both in ecclesiastical and civil life, whose minds were, as yet, incapable of forming a conception of the great principle of spiritual freedom, which had taken full possession of his soul, and which was now gradually moulding all his opinions, and, by unseen agencies, shaping the

destiny, which the future had in store for him He believed that no human power had the right to intermeddle in matters of conscience; and that neither church nor state, neither bishop nor priest nor King, may prescribe the smallest iota of religious faith. For this, he maintained, a man is responsible to God alone.

This principle, now so familiar and well-established, was, in all its applications, entirely at variance with the whole structure of society in the colony of Massachusetts; and every new assertion of it on the part of Mr. Williams, or of any of the doctrines which he had connected with it, was sure to lead him into new collision with the authorities. Hence it was, that every expression of his opinions seemed to be heresy, and almost every act of his life a protest against the legislation and the customs of the people among whom he lived. His preaching was faithful, his doctrines on all the great essentials of Christian faith were sound, and his life was of blameless purity. Yet he was fast falling beneath the ban both of civil and ecclesiastical proscription. His own church had expressed their confidence in his character; but beyond his fellow-citizens of Salem, there was none that extended to him the hand of fellowship, or expressed the slightest sympathy with the great truths that were struggling in his mind.

The occurrences, which have already been related, had undoubtedly confirmed the prejudices of the magistrates, and exerted an important influence in hastening on the severe proceedings, which were finally adopted against him. It has also been said that these occurrences were deemed more flagrant and dangerous in consequence of a feeling of jealousy, which existed at that time between Boston and Salem. Boston was the residence of the Governor and of most of the Council. It was also the capital of the colony, and the centre of both civil and religious influence and authority. It would not be strange, therefore, if the views of a minister of Salem should be regarded with suspicion more readily than would have been the case with a minister of Boston. The reputation of Mr. Williams among his own townsmen was of high order and of unsullied purity. He had brought with him to Salem some of the inhabitants of Plymouth, who were attached to his ministry, and it may have been feared that, in connection with other causes, his resolute spirit and popular talents would give an importance to the town that might eclipse the metropolis.

However this may have been, but few sessions of the Court were held, during his second residence in Salem, at which he was not summoned to appear, or at which his opinions or

conduct were not, in some manner, the subject of complaint and reprobation. A few months after his settlement as pastor of the church, we find him again obnoxious to the Court for having publicly called in question the King's patent, and also "for usual terming the churches of England antichristian." Again, in the following April, 1635, the Governor and assistants summoned him to appear at Boston. "The occasion was," as appears from the Journal of Governor Winthrop, "that he had taught publicly that a magistrate ought not to tender an oath to an unregenerate man, for that we thereby have communion with a wicked man in the worship of God, and cause him to take the name of God in vain. He was heard before all the ministers, and very clearly confuted." So says the Governor. Had Mr. Williams given a version of the argument, the result might have been stated differently.

The opinion of Mr. Williams, here referred to, seems to have been called forth on the occasion of the Court's enacting what is known by the name of the "Freeman's Oath." This oath was appointed from an apprehension of "Episcopal and malignant practices against the country," in order to test the fidelity of the people of the colony. It in reality changed the obligations of allegiance from the government of

King Charles to the government of Massachusetts, and, by an order of the Court, was imposed upon every man of sixteen years of age and upwards, upon the penalty of his being punished, in case of refusing to take it, at the discretion of the Court. Williams opposed the oath, as contrary to the charter, and as inconsistent with the duty of British subjects; and, in the course of his opposition, he developed his singular views of the nature of an oath. His great principle of the liberty of conscience led him to doubt the right of the colony to impose an oath; and his opposition was so determined, that "the government was forced to desist from that proceeding."

His opinions upon this subject appear to have been maintained by a train of reasoning peculiar to himself; and, though unfolded somewhat at length in some of his subsequent writings, they are yet by no means easy of full comprehension. He seems to have regarded an oath as in some sense an act of worship, which was to be entered upon only on the most serious occasions, and with devout feelings, and which, like any other act of worship, the civil magistrate had no right to enforce against the consent of the individual. His opinions, it would appear, were formed while living in England; it may be, from an observation of the light

manner in which oaths were administered, and of the offensive formality of kissing the Bible, which was usually connected with their administration. In his reply to George Fox, he declares, that he has submitted to the loss of large sums in the courts of England, rather than yield to these formalities, though he did not object to taking the oath without them; which the judges, he says, were unwilling to admit, without an act of Parliament.

The controversy with the authorities of Massachusetts, in which the principles of Williams had impelled him to engage, was now becoming every day more violent, and running into almost every act of the Court, and every relation of social life. They still maintained a connection with the Church of England, and manifested a respect for its institutions. Williams retained a vivid recollection of its intolerant acts, and boldly declared its "bloody tenet of persecution," as he termed it, to be "most lamentably contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ." The magistrates enacted a law, requiring every man to attend public worship, and to contribute to its support. This he denounced as an open violation of natural rights, and the prolific source of every form of persecution. "No one," said he, "should be bound to maintain a worship against his own consent." The ablest divines were ap-

pointed to reason with him, and to confute the heresies that seemed wrought into his very being. But it was all in vain. His opinions were misrepresented, and carried out to absurd and unauthorized conclusions, and these were charged upon him as essential parts of his doctrine; but he contented himself simply with denying what he did not believe, and reiterating, with irrepressible boldness, the faith which he held. This faith set a clear and well-defined limit to the exercise of the civil power. "It extends," said he, with singular accuracy and clearness of perception, "only to the bodies, and goods, and outward estates of men;" with conscience and with religious opinions "the civil magistrate may not intermeddle, even to stop a church from apostasy and heresy." These were the opinions that inflamed the whole body of the divines, and called down upon his head the sternest censures from both the civil and ecclesiastical heads of the colony.

While affairs were in this condition, the people of Salem preferred to the Court a claim for a tract of land lying in Marblehead Neck; but the Court, as a punishment for the contempt of authority the town had shown in settling Mr Williams, refused to allow the claim. The reason of the refusal was imbodied in the decision itself. This reckless mingling together of mat-

ters entirely separate and independent, Williams taught his church strongly to resent, as an act of flagrant injustice. In conjunction with the church, he wrote "letters of admonition unto all the churches, whereof any of the magistrates were members, that they might admonish the magistrates of their injustice."* This course, in our times, would be called appealing to the people; for the members of the churches alone were freemen of the colony, and in the absence of that great redresser of wrongs, the public press,† it was the only mode in which the general sense of justice could be effectually addressed. But the democratic principle was then in its infancy, and the right of instruction to the deputies of the people, now so frequently exercised, was at that time but imperfectly understood. The Court, therefore, were not to be diverted by any apprehension of popular disapprobation. The act of Williams and his church, in thus presuming to appeal from the decision of the magistrates to the tribunal of public sentiment, seemed to them little less than open rebellion; and at the next meeting of the Court,

---

* Master John Cotton's *Reply to Roger Williams.*

† The first newspaper in the American colonies was commenced at Boston, in 1704. It was called "The Boston News-Letter."

the deputies of Salem were deprived of their seats until the letter had been satisfactorily explained, and ample apology had been made for their participation in its authorship and doctrines.

The town of Salem submitted to the disfranchisement, and its deputies made the apology which was demanded, though not till after Mr. Endicott, the principal deputy, had suffered imprisonment for his adherence to the doctrines of the letter. Williams, at this juncture, addressed another letter to his church, urging them to renounce all communion with the other churches of the colony; but they had been humbled by the magistrates, and refused any longer to second the views of their teacher.

When, on a former occasion, in his treatise concerning the patent, he had been charged by the Court with disowning his allegiance to the King, he had explained his views, and had given his book to the Governor to be burned. But now his principles and his conduct required no explanation, and by him, at least, they were not to be retracted. They were the deepest-seated principles of his moral nature, and could be surrendered only with existence itself. Alone in his maintenance of them, when his townsmen and his church had all yielded to the mandate of power, and deserted him; when even his wife,

it may be fearing the consequences that were already threatening her family, added her entreaties, and even her reproaches, to swell the tide that was setting against him; he stands boldly forth, the sublimest moral object of the time, and calmly waits the storm that is fiercely driving towards him. The ministers, with Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker at their head, sent a committee to Salem, to deal with him, and censure him; but he disowned their spiritual jurisdiction, and declared himself "ready to be bound, and banished, and even to die in New England," rather than renounce the clear convictions, which had been fastened more firmly upon his understanding by the persecutions he had suffered. He felt that a great principle was committed to him to maintain and defend; that "the removal of the yoke of soul-oppression" was worthy to task his best energies, and to call forth the costliest sacrifices. He plainly delighted himself with anticipating the results of the spiritual freedom for which he was contending, and pictured to his imagination the blessings that would follow in its train; and he bound himself to the conclusion, expressed in his own strong language, that, "as it will prove an act of mercy and righteousness to the en slaved nations, so it is of binding force to en gage the whole and every interest and con

science to preserve the common liberty and peace."

The controversy having arrived at a crisis like this, the ministers, at the request of the court, assembled to consider his case, and to give their advice to the magistrates. They "professedly declared" that he deserved to be banished from the colony for maintaining the doctrine "that the civil magistrate might not intermeddle even to stop a church from apostasy and heresy," and that the churches ought to request the magistrates to remove him. Thus was the opinion of the ecclesiastical authorities plainly and fully declared, and the sentence of the civil power was not long delayed.

In July, he was summoned to Boston, to answer to the charges brought against him at the General Court, which was then in session. He was here, before the highest tribunal of the colony, solemnly charged with the *crime* of maintaining the following dangerous opinions. First, That the magistrate ought not to punish the breach of the first table, otherwise than in such cases as did disturb the civil peace. Secondly, That he ought not to tender an oath to an unregenerate man. Thirdly, That he ought not to pray with such, though wife, child, &c. Fourthly, That a man ought not to give thanks after sac-

rament, nor after meat." * These several charges may have represented his opinions very imperfectly; but even supposing them to be perfectly accurate expressions of the views which he really entertained, they yet seem strange matters for the action of a civil tribunal of legislators and magistrates.

In the trial of Roger Williams, if trial it may be called, there appears to have been no examination of witnesses, and no hearing of counsel. In all the colony, there were none to raise a question of jurisdiction, save alone the individual accused; and in raising this question his very crime consisted. The charges were the subject of long and serious debate, which terminated in allowing him and the church in Salem "time to consider these things till the next General Court, and then, either to give satisfaction, or to expect the sentence." The interval, we may readily imagine, was a period of no common excitement among the churches and towns of Massachusetts Bay. The contest was one that could not fail to awaken the deepest interest among men entertaining views of government and religion like those prevalent among the early Puritans. On one side was arrayed the whole power of the civil government, supported by the

* Winthrop's *Journal*, Vol. I. p. 162.

united voice of the clergy, and by the general sentiment of the people; on the other was a single individual, a minister of the gospel, of distinguished talents and of blameless life, who yet had ventured to assert the freedom of conscience, and to deny the jurisdiction of any human authority in controlling its dictates or decisions. The purity of the churches, and the cause of sound doctrine, were thought to be in peril, and all waited with eager expectation to know the issue of this first schism that had sprung up among the Pilgrim bands of New England.

The next General Court was held in October, 1635. Mr. Williams was again summoned before the Court, and appeared for the last time. His opinions had not changed. He had been deserted by most of those, who at first had made common cause with him; but he still stood firm, the undaunted champion of the principles which he had espoused. The Court themselves were as little inclined to abandon the ground they had taken. Instructed by the advice they had received from the ministers, they decided, though not by a large majority of the members, that he should depart out of their jurisdiction within six weeks.

The following is the act of banishment, as it stands upon the colony records. "Whereas, Mr. Roger Williams, one of the elders of the

church of Salem, hath broached and divulged divers new and dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates; as also writ letters of defamation, both of the magistrates and churches here, and that before any conviction, and yet maintaineth the same without any retractation; it is therefore ordered, that the said Mr. Williams shall depart out of this jurisdiction within six weeks now next ensuing, which if he neglect to perform, it shall be lawful for the Governor and two of the magistrates to send him to some place out of this jurisdiction, not to return any more without license from the Court."

The records also contain the following decree, which was passed at the same Court, and which serves to illustrate the inquisitorial spirit of the tribunal, which banished Roger Williams, and which, in so many other instances, asserted its jurisdiction over the thoughts and the opinions of men. "Mr. Samuel Sharpe is enjoined to appear at the next particular Court, to answer for the letter, that came from the church of Salem, as also *to bring the names of those that will justify the same*, or else to acknowledge his offence under his own hand, for his own particular." *

The sentence of banishment was passed on

* Savage's *Winthrop*, Vol. I. p. 167, note.

the 3d of November; all the ministers, save one, approving it. Though it must have been anticipated, and perhaps even hoped for, yet its final passage was productive of no small reaction and excitement among the more quiet citizens and the sober-minded laymen of the colony. Especially in Salem, it is said, the whole community was in an uproar. The time was soon after extended so as to allow him to remain till spring. But his presence was soon found to endanger too much the orthodoxy of the people. It was complained to the Court, that he still persisted in maintaining and uttering his opinions; that many of the people, "taken with an apprehension of his godliness," resorted to his house to listen to his teachings, and that he was preparing to withdraw with them from Massachusetts, and form a settlement upon Narragansett Bay.

The neighborhood of a new colony, thus founded upon the principles of Roger Williams, was the subject of no very agreeable anticipation to the fathers of Massachusetts; and upon receiving the information, they determined to send him to England, by a ship then lying in the harbor ready for sea.

For this purpose, he received another summons to attend the Court at Boston. It was now winter. His health was impaired by the

labors he had endured, and the excitements through which he had passed. Injustice and oppression, the desertion of his friends, and the hard speeches of his enemies, had wounded his spirit, though they had not imbittered the feelings of his heart. He sent an answer, refusing to obey the summons of the Court, which was borne to Boston by "divers of the people of Salem," alleging, at the same time, as a reason of his refusal, the ill health from which he was suffering.

But the magistrates were not thus to be defeated. They sent a small sloop, or pinnace, to Salem, with a warrant to Captain Underhill to apprehend him, and carry him on board the ship, which was to sail immediately for England. When, however, the officers went to his house, they found his wife and children, but he had already gone three days before.

Had the warrant of the magistrates found him still in Salem, the name of Roger Williams would have been linked with far other scenes and achievements than those with which it is now forever associated. He would have been transported back to England, and, instead of becoming the founder of a state in the American confederacy, and passing his life in the comparative obscurity of a New England settlement, he might have vindicated the cause

of freedom in the British Parliament, and become a sharer in the triumphs and defeats through which it passed in that age of revolution and crime; in England, as in America, he would still have asserted the same great principles; and history might have blazoned his brilliant deeds, and recorded his name with those of Hampden, and Milton, and Sir Henry Vane, his friends and illustrious compeers in the same noble cause.

CHAPTER VI.

His Wanderings after his Banishment. — He visits Massasoit, and begins a Settlement at Seekonk. — He crosses the River, and lays the Foundations of Providence.

It was in circumstances like these, that the founder of Rhode Island was compelled to leave the colony, to which he had fled to escape the yoke of ecclesiastical tyranny in England. It was like a second exile, rendered the more difficult to be borne, because of the hands by which it was forced upon him, and the wintry solitude into which it drove him forth

The approbation which the ministers gave to the act by which he was banished, was much more nearly unanimous than the vote of the magistrates by which it had been passed. Indeed, the whole proceeding had its origin in a mistaken, though, doubtless, sincere regard for the interests of religion. Though the language of the sentence charges him with defamation of the magistrates, yet it was only in denying their jurisdiction in matters of conscience, and in condemning their unjust proceedings, that this defamation consisted. It was not pretended that he had violated any law, that he had been guilty of any immoral act, or even that he had proved faithless to any trust, either as a minister or a citizen; his opinions were his only crimes, and for these, and these alone, did the Court of Massachusetts decide to send him from their jurisdiction.

From the narrative which has already been given, it is plain that the head and front of his offending consisted in his maintaining, that the civil magistrate has no right to interfere with religious opinions. Of the truth of this principle, and of its paramount importance to the well-being of society, there is no longer any room for question. It is now the cherished sentiment of the people of this country, and is rapidly extending its sway throughout the Prot-

estant world. In the mind of Roger Williams, even at an early period of life, it was clearly conceived, and earnestly pressed to its legitimate results; though it was there mingled with other opinions, with which it had no natural connection. It may also be admitted, that, while in Massachusetts, he advocated his principle with too urgent a zeal, and with too little regard for the prevailing opinions of the age; but, after making every allowance that either justice or charity can claim, his banishment must still be regarded as an arbitrary proceeding, utterly without foundation either in justice or in state necessity. It was the offspring of a principle that would justify every species of tyranny, and it will forever remain among the few spots that tarnish the escutcheon of Massachusetts, otherwise radiant with unnumbered virtues.

At the period to which this narrative relates, how different was the aspect of New England from that which she now presents! From the shores of Massachusetts Bay to the shores of the Narragansett, is now a pleasant excursion of a few hours, through busy villages and cultivated fields, and across a region diversified everywhere with the innumerable occupations and the ever-cheerful sights and sounds of civilized life. But, at the time of Roger Wil-

liams's banishment, none of these had even begun to be. The only settlements of white men, in the district now comprising the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire, were scattered along the coast from Cape Cod to Portsmouth. The colonists, in that early day, had seldom travelled far into the interior. The whole extent of country stretching northward from the ocean, between Boston or Plymouth on the east, and the Pawtucket or Seekonk River on the west, now embracing several thickly-peopled counties of the state of Massachusetts, was then a wide wilderness, interspersed with thick forests, and presenting scarcely a single dwelling of civilized man.

It was in January, 1636, the sternest month of a New England winter, when Roger Williams left his wife and babes in Salem, in order to escape the warrant, that would have conducted him to the ship then waiting to bear him to England. He went forth an exiled man, to trust his life and fortunes to the rough chances of the wilderness, that then skirted the colonies of Plymouth and of Massachusetts Bay. Seldom has an exile for opinion's sake been driven from a Christian community to encounter more severe necessities, or endure more crushing privations. He was without companions, and without a place of refuge from the severities of the

pitiless season. Though he has left no detailed account of his wanderings, yet here and there a scattered allusion, in his writings, tells us how wretched must have been his exiled condition. In a letter to his friend Major Mason, written thirty-five years afterwards, he speaks of still feeling its effects. "I was sorely tossed," says he, "for fourteen weeks, in a bitter winter season, not knowing what bread or bed did mean." *

In the absence of authentic narrative, the imagination calls up the desolate aspect of New England two hundred years ago, and pictures the scene of his "sorrowful flight." Before him spread the wide forest, covered with the deep snows of midwinter, tracked by wild beasts, whose numbers and ferocity civilization had not yet diminished, and diversified only by occasional groups of the inhospitable dwellings of the Indians. Behind him were his family and his home, in the settlements from which he had been banished for conscience' sake. Provided only with the poorest means of subsistence, separated from the commonest charities

* Upon this period in the life of the father of Rhode Island, one of the gifted sons of that state has founded the epic narrative of "*What Cheer, or Roger Williams in Banishment*," an historical poem of unusual fidelity to history, and containing passages of great beauty and pathos.

of civilized life, how heavily must those dreary weeks have rolled away! The winter's storm roars in the forest, the howl of the wolf and the scream of the panther are borne upon the blast; but his only shelter is a hollow tree, or the comfortless cabins of the savages. Yet this outcast man, whom rulers had banished, whom churches and clergy had proscribed, bears with him, in his desert wanderings, a great doctrine of Christian ethics, an eternal principle of civil right, of inestimable importance to all mankind. He alone comprehends it in its true significance; and, as an apostle commissioned from Heaven, he alone has preached it to a blind and bigoted age. If he perishes amidst the fury of the storm, or from the rage of wild beasts, or of savage men, there is not another in New England, perhaps not in Christendom, who fully comprehends it, and dares assert it.

But he was not destined thus to perish. In the days of his prosperity, he had assiduously cultivated the friendship of the Indians, who visited the settlements of the colonists. He had thus acquired the use of their language, and now, in his time of need, when he presented himself at their squalid cabins, a houseless wanderer, they received him to their rude hospitality. "These ravens," says he, "fed me in the wilderness." And, in after life, he ever ac

knowledged, with pious gratitude, the Providence that watched over him, and protected him amidst the sufferings and perils through which he passed.

Of the incidents that befell him in his solitary wanderings, after leaving Salem, a few words will suffice to tell all that can be gleaned from his writings; and this is to be gathered rather from incidental allusions than from any narrative he has left. These are found mainly in the letter to Major Mason, to which reference has already been made. It bears date at Providence, June 22d, 1670, and makes mention of the following interesting fact, that serves to show how the spirit of humanity, at least in some of the Massachusetts magistrates, struggled with the perverted sense of duty, which dictated his banishment. At the time of his leaving Salem, Governor Winthrop, who, the year before, had been supplanted in the chief magistracy of the colony by Thomas Dudley,* wrote to Williams "to steer his course to the Narragansett Bay and Indians," as a region as yet unappropriated by any of the patents of the King. "I took," says he, "his prudent motion as a hint and voice from God; and, waiving all

* Mr. Haynes, the successor of Dudley, was Governor when Williams was banished.

other thoughts and motions, I steered my course from Salem, (though in winter snow, which I feel yet,) unto these parts, wherein I may say, *Peniel;* I have seen the face of God."

It would appear that, when he fled from Salem, he made his way through the forest to the lodges of the Pokanokets, who occupied the country north from Mount Hope as far as Charles River. Ousemaguin, or Massasoit, the famous chief of this tribe, had known Mr. Williams when he lived in Plymouth, and had often received presents and tokens of kindness at his hands; and now, in the days of his friendless exile, the aged chief welcomed him to his cabin at Mount Hope, and extended to him the protection and aid he required. He granted to him a tract of land on the Seekonk River, to which, at the opening of spring, he repaired, and where "he pitched and began to build and plant." * At this place, also, at the same time, he was joined by a number of his friends from Salem. Here he doubtless thought his wanderings were ended, and, with the friends who had come to share his exile, he hoped to plant a settlement that should be free forever from

* The spot, which was selected as the site of the new settlement, is near the beautiful bend in the river, now known as "Manton's Cove," a short distance above the upper bridge, directly eastward of Providence.

"the yoke of soul-oppression," which the authorities of Massachusetts Bay had sought to fasten on their necks.

But scarcely had the first dwelling been raised in the new settlement, scarcely had the corn, which they had planted, appeared above the ground, when he was again disturbed, and obliged to move still further from Christian neighbors and the dwellings of civilized men "I received a letter," says he, "from my ancient friend, Mr. Winslow, then Governor of Plymouth, professing his own and others' love and respect for me, yet lovingly advising me, since I was fallen into the edge of their bounds, and they were loth to displease the Bay, to remove but to the other side of the water; and then, he said, I had the country before me, and might be as free as themselves, and we should be loving neighbors together." *

With the advice given him in this friendly manner, and apparently without any sinister design, his experience had now taught him the wisdom to comply. He accordingly soon abandoned the fields which he had planted, and the dwelling he had begun to build, and embarked in a canoe upon the Seekonk River, in quest of another spot, where, unmolested, he might rear

* Letter to Mason. *Mass. Hist. Coll.* Vol. I. p. 275.

a home and plant a separate colony. There were five others, who, having joined him at Seekonk, bore him company in the excursion in which he thus went forth to become the founder of a city and a state. Tradition has handed down, among the sons of these earliest citizens of Rhode Island, the course and incidents of their singular voyage. As the little bark, thus freighted with the fortunes of a future state, was borne along on the waters of the Seekonk, Williams was greeted by some Indians, from the heights that rise on the western banks of the stream, with the friendly salutation, '*What cheer, Netop? What cheer?*' and first came to land at the spot now called *Slate Rock*, in the rear of the mansion of His Excellency Governor Fenner.*

After exchanging salutations with the Indians, and, as is probable, obtaining some additional information concerning the country which stretched, in summer's beauty, before him, he again embarked, and, coasting along the stream, passed

---

* The adjacent estate still bears the name of "Whatcheer." This land, Roger Williams says, he planted with his own hands; and by him it was conveyed to James Ellis, who soon after sold it to Arthur Fenner, the first of the ancient and respected family to whom it has ever since belonged. *Netop* means "friend." Williams's *Key*, p. 2.

round the headlands, now known as Fox Point, and India Point, up the harbor, to the mouth of the Mooshausic River. Here he landed, and, upon the beautiful slope of the hill that ascends from the river, he descried the spring around which he commenced the first "plantations of Providence."

It was in the latter part of June, 1636, as well as can be ascertained, that Roger Williams and his companions began the settlement at the mouth of the Mooshausic River. A little distance north of what is now the centre of the city, the spring is still pointed out, which drew the attention of the humble voyagers from Seekonk. Here, after so many wanderings, was the weary exile to find a home, and to lay the foundations of a city, which should be a perpetual memorial of pious gratitude to the superintending Providence which had protected him and guided him to the spot. How changed is the scene in the lapse of two hundred years! Art and Wealth have covered with their beautiful mansions the hill-side that rose in luxuriant verdure before him, and Learning has erected her halls upon its summit. The solitary place has become a thickly-peopled city, the abode of wealth and of elegance, and, instead of the deep silence of nature, that then reigned over the

scene, there are now heard, over hill, and plain, and water, the hum of the spindle, the bustle of trade, and the cheerful murmurs of busy life.

CHAPTER VII.

The principal Indian Tribes of New England — Williams's Intercourse with them. — His Views of their Rights, and his Influence with them. — Freedom of the Colony at Providence. — Its Government limited to civil Things. — Circumstances in which Williams is placed.

Of the numerous Indian tribes that occupied the territory of New England at the period of its first settlement by the whites, the most important were the Pokanokets, the Pequots, with their tributaries, the Mohegans, and the Narragansetts. The Pokanokets were scattered from Mount Hope, over the region now comprised in the counties of Bristol and Plymouth, in the state of Massachusetts. This tribe, like most of the others on the coast, had been greatly reduced by the ravages of the pestilence, which, a short period before the arrival of the English, had swept away such multitudes of the

aboriginal race. The Pequots and Mohegans possessed the greater part of the state of Connecticut. They were the fiercest and most warlike of all the New England tribes, and in their intercourse with the English, they perpetually manifested their treacherous and hostile spirit. They were confident of their own strength, and embraced, with savage eagerness, every opportunity which presented itself to avenge the encroachments, which the strangers were gradually making upon their native domain.

The Narragansetts held beneath their sway the greater part of what is now the state of Rhode Island, together with the islands of the bay, and a portion of Long Island. Though shy of the English, they were the most intelligent and civilized, the most generous and faithful, of all the New England Indians. They had cultivated agriculture, and others of the simpler arts of life, and were also the manufacturers of nearly all the *wampumpeag* in use among the natives as money. They were a numerous and powerful tribe; and, though they had gradually lost their savage relish for war, they still could muster from four to five thousand fighting men from their own and the tributary tribes.

The language of the several tribes of New England seems to have been essentially the same. Indeed, Roger Williams himself informs

us, that, with his knowledge of the Narragansett tongue, he "had entered into the secrets of those countries wherever the English dwell, about two hundred miles, between the French and Dutch plantations;" and he adds, that "with this help a man may converse with thousands of the Indians all over the country." It is probable, also, that the same language, though with the modifications of various dialects, extended among the tribes of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. This singular, and, as it has been represented, exceedingly copious and versatile language has been made the subject of much curious inquiry among the philologists of our own and of other lands. The people who spoke it have long since vanished from the hills and forests of New England; but the language itself has survived them in the pious though humble labors of their benefactors. Specimens of its endless words and its unique structure are still to be found in the "Key," which Williams wrote, in the "Grammar" of John Eliot, and especially in the few scattered copies that remain of the Indian Bible, which the noble-minded apostle toiled away the best years of his life in translating.

With these several tribes, whose names and localities we have thus incidentally mentioned, Mr. Williams, during the remainder of his life

was thrown into frequent, and, in some instances, most intimate association. He was always their friend, the vindicator of their rights, the interpreter of their treaties, and the pacificator of their quarrels. He thus acquired an influence over them far superior to that of any other person of his time.

The spot at which he had landed, and where he began to plant the new settlement, was within the territory belonging to the Narragansetts. Canonicus, the aged chief of the tribe, and Miantonomo, his nephew, had visited the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, while Williams resided there, and had learned to regard him, in virtue of his being a minister, as one of the sachems of the English. He had also taken special pains to conciliate their good-will and gain their confidence, and "spared no cost towards them, in tokens and presents to Canonicus and all his, many years before he came to Narragansett in person." Indeed, there is reason to believe, that, at an early period after his arrival in New England, on finding himself so widely at variance with his Puritan brethren, he conceived the design of withdrawing from the colonies, and settling among the Indians, that he might labor as a missionary for their civilization and conversion to Christianity; and for this purpose, as it would appear, he then had "several

treaties" with the Narragansett sachems, and received from them the promise of a tract of land within their jurisdiction. The design of removing thither he probably ceased to entertain some time before his banishment; yet now, when he was driven into the territory of the friendly sachems, he avails himself of the promise they had formerly made, and receives from them a grant of the land at Providence, on which he had settled with his companions.

In all his dealings with the Indians, Mr. Williams was governed by a strict regard to the rights, which, he had always contended, belonged to them as the sole proprietors of the soil. He justly conceived that it belonged to them alone to give away the lands, which they and their fathers had occupied for centuries. In accordance with this principle, the assertion of which had given so much offence in Massachusetts, he waits for no patent from the King to confer upon him, as a favor from his majesty, the territory he sought to possess, but goes directly to the great sachems of the country, and purchases of them a clear title to the lands "lying upor the two fresh rivers, called Mooshausic and Wanasquatucket." The sachems, also, in consideration of his many kindnesses and services to them, ceded to him, as a gratuity, all the land lying between the above-named rivers

and the Pawtuxet. The terms of these grants are sufficiently general to give rise, in these days, to endless litigation; and, at different periods in the early history of the town, they were productive of no little uncertainty and dispute. It must be admitted that they reflect but little credit on the legal education, which the founder of Rhode Island is said to have pursued under the direction of Sir Edward Coke.

Of the settlement at Providence Roger Williams was the earliest projector, and the sole negotiator with the Indians. It was by his influence, and at his expense, that the purchase was procured from Canonicus and Miantonomo, who partook largely of the shyness and jealousy of the English so common to their tribe. He says, "It was not thousands nor tens of thousands of money, that could have bought of them an English entrance into this bay." It was done by "that language, acquaintance, and favor with the natives," which he had acquired, and which he knew so well how to use. He was, in every sense, the father of the infant colony. By great charge and travel, he secured the land on which it was planted, and established a loving and peaceable neighborhood with the sachems around, by presents and gratuities, of which he also sustained the cost. In order to raise the funds needed for this purpose, and for removing his

wife and family to the new settlement, he was obliged to mortgage his house and land in Salem.

Unlike the Pilgrims, who had organized their commonwealth simply for securing liberty for their own faith and worship, Roger Williams, in framing the organization of the new colony, did not lose sight of the great principle of spiritual freedom, for which he had contended while in Massachusetts. This principle was as broad as humanity itself, and he did not fail to perceive its application to others, as readily and clearly as to himself. The persons who accompanied him from Seekonk, and the others who soon after joined him at Providence, came without any solicitation from him; yet he received them with the utmost kindness. He prescribed to them no conditions of their admission to the colony, and exercised over them no personal control, but freely shared with them all that the friendship of the Indians had given him to bestow. By the deeds of the sachems of Narragansett, the lands at Providence were conveyed to him alone, and "were his as much as any man's coat upon his back." He might have retained them as his own permanent fee, and, like the founders of Pennsylvania and Maryland, having secured them by a charter from the King, he might have contin-

ued the unquestioned proprietary of the entire domain. He thus might have amassed wealth and dignities, and bequeathed them as a legacy to his children.

Such, however, was not the policy which he adopted. He desired that the new settlement might be "for a shelter for persons distressed for conscience," and he welcomed with an open hand all who came to him for refuge. He chose to found the infant commonwealth in the simple principles of pure democracy, and reserved to himself no more either of authority or of land than he freely distributed to his associates. Though, in procuring the land, he had probably parted with the whole of his little property, he yet gave it all, as a free gift, to the persons who had united with him in forming the settlement. The town subsequently voted him the sum of thirty pounds, not as purchase money, or as compensation for his services and expenditures, but as "a loving gratuity," which, however, was to be paid from the common fund appointed to be created by the payment of thirty shillings by each person, who should subsequently be admitted a member of the colony.

Thus was the first settlement within the territory of Rhode Island commenced, in the spirit of generous liberality and mutual confidence, and with the utmost degree of personal free-

dom that can consist with the existence of civil society. The little community thrived beneath the genial influence of unrestricted freedom; it was gradually enlarged by emigrations from the neighboring colonies and from England; for the ships that now covered the Bay of Massachusetts came crowded with emigrants to the new world. They bore to the shores of New England, not the motley throng of homeless and wretched beings, who now crowd the steerage of our packet ships, but mainly the intelligent and the virtuous, who had been persecuted for conscience' sake, and who preferred a life of exile to the disabilities and privations to which they were subjected at home. Among them were often found persons of superior education, and of large estates, mingled with the adventurous spirits, who sought in the distant colonies a freer range of action and opinion, and a wider sphere of enterprise. Many of these came to the plantations at Providence, where the opinions and conduct of individuals were the least subjected to the scrutiny of the public.

The persons who thus joined the settlement of Roger Williams bound themselves to conform to the principles on which it had been founded, and also to be governed by the orders and agreements of the majority. They were admitted to the fellowship of the settlers by sub-

scribing the following instrument, which stands without date in the earliest records of the colony, and was undoubtedly the first form of civil government which the inhabitants adopted.

"We, whose names are here underwritten, being desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves, in active or passive obedience, to all such orders or agreements as shall be made for public good of the body in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated together into a township, and such others whom they shall admit into the same, only in civil things."

This earliest form of the social compact, adopted by the settlers at Providence, is remarkable alike for its simplicity, and for the entire freedom it guaranties to each individual in every sphere of life, save *in civil things* alone. It embodies the principle for which Roger Williams had contended ever since his arrival in America, and for the maintenance of which he had been persecuted by the Court of Massachusetts, and, it is believed, is the first form of government recorded in history that contains an express practical recognition of the rights of conscience. This instrument was undoubtedly written by the father of the colony himself. It breathes his spirit, and bears the im-

press of his character. While it expressly limits the power of the body politic to the civil relations of the people, it at the same time carefully guards against any exaggerated notions or wild misapplications of personal freedom, by strictly binding every individual to obey the orders and agreements of the majority of the "masters of families." It was the perfection of civil freedom, without any alloy of licentiousness, while it left the conscience undisturbed in its allegiance to God alone. The spirit, which was thus infused into the government and social organization of the colony, at the very beginning of its existence, has never ceased to characterize the legislation of Rhode Island; and, to this day, its influence is still felt among the people. It is a prominent fact in her history, that her citizens have ever been distinguished for the vigilance with which they have watched over the rights of conscience; and not a single act of religious intolerance has ever disgraced the statute-book of the state. While, it may be, in other things she has learned salutary lessons from her sister states, in this respect, at least, they are largely indebted to the success of her experiment, and the influence of her well-sustained example.*

---

* See APPENDIX, No. I.

The government of the town remained in the hands of its citizens, and was administered in the simple forms of a pure democracy for a number of years. No mention is found, in the records, of any authority delegated to individuals by the body politic before the year 1640.* No officers were appointed, except a town treasurer; for none was needed, since every question affecting the public weal, whether of a legislative or a judicial character, could well be arbitrated in the assembly of the people. This feature in the organization of the new society was a novelty among the settlements of New England, and gave rise to the reproach, that the settlers at Providence were opposed to magistrates. But the fact was far otherwise. Amidst the simple forms and harmonious interests of a newly-planted community, that claimed no jurisdiction in matters of opinion, the office of magistrate would have been little else than a needless sinecure. The "orders and agreements of the majority" determined the action of each individual, and it is not improbable that the personal influence of their leader often proved an efficient aid in allaying the bickerings and strifes, that sprang up among the citizens of the little commonwealth. The numer-

* Staples's *Annals of Providence.*

ous declarations in his writings, pertaining to the subject, and the public acts of his life, show that he fully understood the principles of civil government, and clearly perceived the eternal distinction that subsists between real freedom and the specious but worthless theories that arrogate its name.

In this humble manner were laid the foundations of the settlement at Providence, and the earliest beginnings of the state of Rhode Island. But other and more pressing necessities, than that of providing for the well-being of the town, must also have claimed the attention of its founder, even during the first months of its existence. He had been obliged to leave the fields he had planted at Seekonk, just as the corn was appearing above the ground; and when he arrived at the mouth of the Mooshausic, it was already too late to raise a harvest from the lands he there purchased of the Indians. The crops he might have raised by the labors of husbandry were thus in a great measure cut off; and, occupied as he must have been during the remainder of the season, he could have done but little towards providing for the wants of his family. A dwelling was to be reared, and the comforts of civilized life were to be gathered, upon a spot till now never trodden by white men. The summer was already far advanced,

and, as he looked forward to the approach of winter, he must have beheld, in the distance, the hungry forms of poverty and want hastening towards his door. He was shut out from all intercourse with the towns of Massachusetts Bay, and must have depended, for the subsistence of his family, mainly upon his casual success in fishing, or upon the scanty supplies of the Indians.

In the course of the autumn, he was visited by Governor Winslow, of Plymouth, of whom he speaks as "a great and pious soul," and who, as he gratefully acknowledges, "put a piece of gold into the hands of his wife for their supply;" an incident which, especially when taken in connection with his own touching allusion to it, shows how nearly he was exposed to "necessity's sharp pinch." His straitened circumstances were doubtless rendered the more aggravated and difficult to be borne, by the consideration that they were brought about by the foolish and bigoted legislation of men, with whom he had made a common cause in coming to New England for conscience' sake, who themselves were exiles, and had tasted the bitter sorrows of a life in the wilderness. It would not have been strange, considering the weakness of our nature, had the treatment which he received from Massachusetts Bay, and the severe privations that

followed from it, embittered his spirit, and shrouded it in the sullen glooms of settled hostility to the magistrates and elders of that colony. But no such result was produced in the mind of Roger Williams. He harbored no feelings of revenge for the injuries he had received. He seems only to have pitied the weakness and regretted the delusion from which they sprang; and he employed the first opportunity, that was presented to him, in requiting the people, who had persecuted and banished him, with the amplest benefits and the noblest self-sacrifices.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Pequot War. — The Services Williams renders the Government of Massachusetts. — His Agency saves the Colonies from Destruction — His Letter to Governor Winthrop. — Issue of the War. — Manner in which his Services are regarded by Massachusetts.

Seldom does the page of history glow with a brighter illustration of the spirit of forgiveness, and of Christian magnanimity, than is presented in the conduct of Roger Williams towards the

authorities of Massachusetts, immediately after his banishment, and while the recollection of his wrongs was yet fresh in his mind. The circumstances, as will appear from the narrative, were those of extreme peril; and the founder of Providence was the only person, who could avert the calamities that threatened to overwhelm the English settlements in New England. Had he then been wanting in the noblest impulses of generosity and duty, the settlements of the early Pilgrims of Plymouth and Massachusetts might have been destroyed amidst the horrors of Indian massacre and conflagration.

The Pequot Indians, who, as we have already stated, had always proved treacherous and hostile to the English, now threatened a universal insurrection, for the purpose of driving them forever from the lands they had acquired. In the summer of 1636, they attacked a party of traders in a sloop, near Block Island, and murdered John Oldham, one of the company; and, having buried the hatchet with all the neighboring tribes, were endeavoring to unite them in a general league, for the entire extermination of the colonies. The frustration of their designs of savage vengeance, and the preservation of New England from the merciless atrocities of Indian war, were accomplished by Roger Williams. Upon receiving intelligence of the mur-

der of Oldham, and the designs of the Pequots, a few weeks after his removal to Providence, he was the first to communicate the information to the Governor of Massachusetts. And to him, whom they had so recently driven into exile, and who was still under the ban of their proscription, did the authorities of the colony commit the work of conciliating the Indians, and preventing the league, which might have brought desolation and bloodshed to all their homes.

Mr. Williams accepted the hazardous and difficult commission of mediating with the Narragansetts, by whose example the course of the other tribes would be governed, and of opposing the influence and designs of the Pequots. It was an enterprise of no common difficulty and peril, and it is not claiming too much for his influence with the Indians, to say, that he was the only man in New England who could have successfully executed it. In his letter to Major Mason, he mentions the leading incidents connected with the undertaking, and we follow the simple narrative he there gives. Upon receiving letters from Governor Vane, requesting him to use his utmost and speediest endeavors to hinder and break the league, he embarks alone, without delay, in his canoe, scarcely informing his wife of the perilous voyage, and hastens over the troubled waters of the Narragansett,

"cutting through a stormy wind and great seas, every minute in hazard of life," to the dwellings of Canonicus and Miantonomo. The Pequot ambassadors were already there, urging every consideration that could arouse the vengeance of these high-spirited though generous chiefs. They pictured before them the gloomy destiny, that was already settling down upon the Indian race, and pointed out to them the means by which the ancient possessors of the soil might regain the domain they had lost, and drive the white men from the country. The influences thus brought to bear upon their minds were well calculated to rouse the hostile feelings of a jealous and suspicious race, and the Narragansetts were already wavering.

In the midst of the savage passions thus powerfully at work in the hearts of the Indians, Williams passed three days and nights at the sachem's house, mingling with the Pequot ambassadors, whose hands were still reeking with the blood of the English they had slain, and "from whom he nightly looked for their bloody knives at his own throat also." But his arduous and perilous mission was crowned with success. The sachems, whose friendship he had long before acquired, yielded to his counsels. He was enabled to "break in pieces the Pequot negotiation and design, and to make and finish,

by many travels and charges, the English league with the Narragansetts and Mohegans against the Pequots."

The treaty, the terms of which were thus arranged by the negotiations of Mr. Williams with the Narragansetts, was ratified by the two contracting parties, at Boston, in October, 1636. Miantonomo, the chief of the tribe, and two sons of Canonicus, with a large number of attendants, made a visit, at the time, to the authorities of Massachusetts Bay, by whom they were received with much parade and demonstration of respect, and with whom they established a perpetual alliance of offence and defence against the hostile Pequots, that was to be binding alike upon themselves and their posterity. The treaty was at first written in the English language; but, the Indians finding it difficult to understand it, from the imperfect explanations the magistrates were able to give, it was sent, probably at their own request, to Providence, to be interpreted to them by Mr. Williams; a fact, which demonstrates the confidence placed in his integrity and friendship by both Indians and English.

Thus was the whole negotiation dependent upon him alone. He broke the league which the Pequots were striving to form, and saved the feeble settlements of New England from the hor-

rors of a universal savage war. He arranged the terms of the treaty with the Narragansetts, and at last interpreted to them its language, and won for its stipulations the reluctant confidence of their suspicious natures. All this was effected, as he has informed us, only at great cost and travel, and at the sacrifice of many private interests, that were pressing themselves upon his attention. The pacification which he thus accomplished was more useful and more glorious than conquest, and was the fruit of a heroism not less worthy of admiration. It was achieved by the self-sacrificing exertions of a spirit too generous to remember its wrongs, and too elevated to think of its own necessities.

But the services of Roger Williams to the people, who had banished him, did not end here. The Pequots, though foiled in their attempts to establish a league with the neighboring tribes, could not be dissuaded from their purposes of vengeance. With them the only question was, whether they should wait, in sullen inaction, the slow progress of the extinction which they foresaw was their inevitable doom, or rush at once upon their enemies, and decide their destiny by a single onset of savage ferocity. They resolved upon the latter course, and, almost in the fury of desperation, determined single-handed to undertake the war. The murders which they per-

petrated, and the cruel tortures they inflicted upon some captives they seized, sent a chill of horror through the settlements of New England. The alarm was increased by their attack on the fort at Saybrook; and the three colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Connecticut resolved immediately to invade the territory of the Pequots, and, if possible, to destroy the tribe, who had vowed perpetual vengeance upon all the English.

During the war, which continued for nearly a year, Mr. Williams was the constant adviser of the colonies, especially of the authorities of Massachusetts Bay, in all the difficult questions that were presented for their decision, and the watchful guardian of all their interests in their relations with the friendly Indians. He received the troops that marched from Boston against the Pequots, under General Stoughton, and entertained them at his own house in Providence, and accompanied them to Narragansett in the expedition, when, at the request of the commander, he returned to be a medium of communication between the army and the people of the colony. He readily sacrificed every private interest, and periled his life in their cause. His devotion to their affairs could not have been more constant and faithful, had they never done him an injury, and had his happiness and his fame been identified with theirs

His conduct, during the whole of this gloomy period in the history of New England, was such as entitles him to the perpetual gratitude of the people of Massachusetts; for he was the instrument in the hands of Providence of saving her and her sister colonies from utter destruction. The subjoined letter, written to his friend Governor Winthrop, in the course of the Pequot war, will serve to bring to view more fully the character of the services he rendered to the government at Boston.

"SIR,

"The latter end of the last week, I gave notice to our neighbor Princes of your intentions and preparations against the common enemy, the Pequots. At my first coming to them, Canonicus (*morosus æque ac barbarus senex*) was very sour, and accused the English and myself for sending the plague amongst them, and threatening to kill him especially.

"Such tidings, it seems, were lately brought to his ears by some of his flatterers and our ill-willers. I discerned cause of bestirring myself, and staid the longer, and at last, through the mercy of the Most High, I not only sweetened his spirit, but possessed him that the plague and other sicknesses were alone in the hand of the one God who made him and us, who, being dis-

pleased with the English for lying, stealing, idleness, and uncleanness, (the natives' epidemical sins,) smote many thousands of us ourselves, with general and late mortalities.

"Miantonomo kept his barbarous court lately at my house, and with him I have far better dealing. He takes some pleasure to visit me, and sent me word of his coming over again some eight days hence. They pass not a week without some skirmishes, though hitherto little loss on either side. They were glad of your preparations, and in much conference with themselves and others, (fishing, *de industriâ*, for instructions from them,) I gathered these observations, which you may please, as cause may be, to consider and take notice of:

"1. They conceive, that to do execution to purpose on the Pequots will require, not two or three days and away, but a riding by it, and following of the work, to and again, the space of three weeks or a month; that there be a falling off and a retreat, as if you were departed, and a falling on again, within three or four days, when they are returned again to their houses securely from their flight.

"2. That, if any pinnaces come in ken, they presently prepare for flight, women, and old men, and children, to a swamp, some three or four miles on the back of them, a marvellous great

and secure swamp, which they called *Ohomowauke*, which signifies owl's nest, and by another name, *Cappacommock*, which signifies a refuge or hiding-place, as I conceive.

"3. That, therefore, Niantick (which is Miantonomo's place of rendezvous) be thought on for the riding and retiring to of vessel or vessels, which place is faithful to the Narragansetts, and at present enmity with the Pequots.

"4. They also conceive it easy for the English, that the provisions and munitions first arrive at Aquetneck, called by us Rhode Island, at the Narragansett's mouth, and then a messenger may be despatched hither, and so to the Bay, for the soldiers to march up by land to the vessels, who otherwise might spend long time about the cape, and fill more vessels than needs.

"5. That the assault should be in the night, when they are commonly more secure and at home, by which advantage, the English, being armed, may enter the houses, and do what execution they please.

"6. That, before the assault be given, an ambush be laid behind them, between them and the swamp, to prevent their flight, &c.

"7. That, to that purpose, such guides as shall be best liked of, be taken along to direct, especially two Pequots, viz., Wequash and Wuttackquiackommin, valiant men, especially the

latter, who have lived there three or four years with the Narragansetts, and know every pass and passage among them, who desire armor to enter their houses.

"8. That it would be pleasing to all natives that women and children be spared, &c.

"9. That, if there be any more land travel to Connecticut, some course would also be taken with the Wunnashowatuckoogs, who are confederates with and a refuge to the Pequots.

"Sir, if any thing be sent to the Princes, I find that Canonicus would gladly accept of a box of eight or ten pounds of sugar, and, indeed, he told me he would thank Mr. Governor for a box full.

"Sir, you may please to take notice of a rude view how the Pequots lie. [Here follows, in the original, a map of the Pequot and Mohegan country.]

"Thus with my best salutes to your worthy selves, and loving friends with you, and daily cries to the Father of mercies for a merciful issue to all these enterprises, I rest,

"Your worship's unfeignedly respective,

"ROGER WILLIAMS."

The Pequot war was terminated by the celebrated battle fought near the fort on Mystic River, in May, 1637. It ended only in the

extinction of the race. The forces of the English, that were engaged in the battle, were the troops of Connecticut, with about twenty men from Massachusetts, and some hundreds of friendly Indians, the whole under the command of Major Mason, who had received the ensigns of authority at Hartford, from the fathers of the colony, amidst the solemn services of religion.

A few days after the battle, the remaining troops, under General Stoughton, arrived from Massachusetts, and the few scattered bands of the Pequots were hunted from their hiding-places. Every village was destroyed, every field was laid waste, and the surviving remnant of the race, about two hundred in number, surrendering to their subjugators, were either sold into slavery by the colonists, or merged in the tribes that surrounded them. Their warriors had nearly all perished in battle. Sassacus, their principal sachem, was treacherously murdered by the Mohawks, to whom he had fled for protection. Not a single family remained to keep alive the Pequot name in the land of their ancestors. It was the beginning of the work of Indian extermination, which has since been so fearfully consummated. It conveyed a terrible lesson of the power of the English, but one that was justified, in most of its features, at least, by the circumstances in which the col-

onies were placed. They had done all in their power to avert the sad necessity; but, when it could no longer be avoided, they determined to strike a blow that would not require to be repeated. It sent terror through all the tribes of New England, and secured the peace of the country through an entire generation. The homes of the Pilgrims were safe from midnight marauders, their intercourse with the Indians was established on a friendly footing, and the pursuits of industry were crowned with liberal rewards beneath the genial auspices of protracted peace.

Thus ended the first of the hopeless struggles, which the natives of New England made to withstand the melancholy doom which they too plainly saw was approaching them. The circumstances of the case left to the settlers no other alternative than a war of utter extermination. The stern necessity that was placed upon them involved either their own destruction or the extinction of the treacherous and hostile tribe.

We have seen the part which Roger Williams bore in the whole course of the troubles with the Pequots, and may well conclude, that to his active agency and superior knowledge of the Indian character and language their successful issue may in no small degree be attrib-

uted. His perilous enterprise at the commencement of hostilities, and his indefatigable perseverance amidst all difficulties, secured the alliance of the Narragansetts, and his judicious counsels and accurate information dictated the plan and guided the progress of the campaign. The colony of Massachusetts Bay proclaimed a solemn thanksgiving at the close of the war, and received in triumph their General and his troops as they returned from the victory. But they passed no vote of thanks, and presented no civic rewards, to him, who had done for them what soldiers could not have effected, who had performed, in breaking the designs of the Pequots, what has been well pronounced to be "the most intrepid and most successful achievement in the whole war; an action as perilous in its execution as it was fortunate in its issue."*

Some hearts, indeed, as he himself relates, were touched with relentings towards him; and even Governor Winthrop moved the question in the Council, and it was debated, whether he had not merited not only to be recalled from banishment, but also to be honored with some mark of favor. "It is known," he significantly adds, "who hindered, who never promoted,

* Bancroft's *History of the United States*, Vol. I. p. 399

the liberty of other men's consciences." * The authorities basely suffered the occasion to pass by without any expression of gratitude for his services, or of the estimation in which they deserved to be held. The decree of banishment was never revoked, and the principles of the founder of Rhode Island were rendered scarcely less odious to the ministers and General Court of Massachusetts by his becoming the benefactor and savior of the colony. They were deemed prejudicial to the interests of religion, and, therefore, dangerous to the state; and no degree of private worth or amount of public services could atone for the heresy of his opinions. It is not strange that the natural feelings of some proved treacherous to the wretched fallacies in which their understandings were involved. The magistrates could accept his services to the state, and confide to his negotiation its most vital interests; but, as guar-

* Letter to Mason. The allusion is to Governor Dudley, who was distinguished above some others of the magistrates for his zeal against heresy. The subject seems occasionally to have awaked "the indignant muse" within him. At his death, some verses, written in his own hand, were found upon his person, containing the following characteristic couplet;

"Let men of God, in court and churches, watch
O'er such as do a toleration hatch."

dians of the popular faith, they could not allow him to step his foot within their jurisdiction, because he denied their authority in matters of conscience. So great was the perversion, which mistaken views of religious duty were suffered to work in the impulses and affections of the otherwise generous and noble-minded fathers of Massachusetts Bay.

CHAPTER IX.

Inadequacy of Legislation for the Suppression of Heresy. — Account of Mrs. Hutchinson and her Controversy in Massachusetts. — Her Adherents are received at Providence. — They settle on Rhode Island. — Williams's Agency in the Purchase of the Island. — Relations of the Colony at Providence with Massachusetts. — Account of Samuel Gorton. — His Settlement at Pawtuxet. — His Difficulties with the People of Providence.

If any illustrations were needed of the utter inefficiency of even the most watchful vigilance of the civil or ecclesiastical authorities, in securing uniformity of religious sentiment in the

minds of a people, they are presented, in the most striking manner, in the early history of the colony of Massachusetts Bay. The settlers at Salem, in the first year of their town, in their zeal for the Puritan faith, had sent home to England John and Samuel Browne, two of their leading and most enterprising fellow-emigrants, by the return of the very ship in which they arrived. Their offence consisted in setting up a worship in Salem according to the forms of the Common Prayer, and the liturgy of the established church. Thus was Episcopacy banished as soon as it appeared, and its leaders transported, like criminals, beyond the sea. Six years later, the General Court of the colony, guided by the advice of the clergy, had passed a decree of perpetual banishment against Roger Williams, for asserting the freedom of conscience. Many others, at different periods, had been summoned to the bar of the same tribunal, to answer for their opinions. Of these, some had given satisfactory explanations, while others had either voluntarily retired from Massachusetts, or been forced beyond her jurisdiction. Still strange opinions multiplied among the people, in spite of all the exertions that were made to suppress them, until, at a synod held at Cambridge, on the 30th of August, 1637, and attended by the ministers and magistrates

of the whole colony, there were found, to the dismay of the Puritans, not less than eighty-two errors in doctrine, requiring their condemnation.

Of these, by far the most important, and the most dreaded, were the principles at that time promulgated by Mrs. Anne Hutchinson, who, in the summer of 1636, with her husband, had arrived at Boston. She was a woman of rare endowments of intellect, and brilliant qualities of both person and character. Her mind, tinged with a shade of fanaticism, was of that impassioned and fervid cast, which enabled her to clothe her peculiar doctrines in the charms of a fascinating eloquence, and easily to subject to her sway the opinions of those, who were not entirely quiescent beneath the despotism of the prevailing theology of the times. The character of her opinions, and the theological strife to which they gave occasion, have often been described in the histories of the period to which this narrative relates, and they need not here be repeated. The questions at issue were, in most respects, the same as have perplexed the minds and divided the opinions of Christians in every age of the church, and about which uniformity of sentiment is never to be hoped for. At this period, however, they broke out into a controversy in every way the most remarkable in our history, which raged for more than a

year, and was terminated only by the banishment of Mrs. Hutchinson, and some of her most influential adherents, and the subjection of the remainder to such restrictions and disabilities as eventually drove them from the colony.

This celebrated controversy was greatly protracted by the distinguished abilities and high standing of many of those, who espoused the cause of Mrs. Hutchinson. Boston was the principal seat of the new opinions. Governor Vane, at that time the chief magistrate of the colony, avowed himself on the side of the heresy, and actually wrote against the enactments which the Court had passed concerning it. Mr. Cotton, also, at whose house the Governor then resided, gave at least the indirect sanction of his influential name to the same views. But the only one among the clergy, who stood forth as a leader of the party, that thus rose in rebellion against the spiritual authorities of the age, was John Wheelwright, the brother of Mrs. Hutchinson. In a fast-day sermon, he had earnestly vindicated his doctrines, and, on being censured by the Court for sedition, had increased their exasperation against him by threatening to appeal to the King. A synod of the ministers and delegates of all the churches was called to pass judgment upon the questions, which thus divided the opinions of

the colony. After a protracted session of three weeks, during which time the numerous errors of doctrine reported to the synod were the subject of long and angry debate, they pronounced against them their decided condemnation. But the strife only became the more furious, and the denunciations of both parties the more vehement; until, at length, the General Court summoned to its bar Mrs. Hutchinson, and Mr. Wheelwright, and Mr. Aspinwall, the leading advocates of the heretical opinions, and placed them on trial for *heresy*. The trial resulted in the banishment of the persons named above from the jurisdiction of the colony. The magistrates, at the same time, proceeded to a measure still more remarkable. Upon the pretence of their having meditated an armed insurrection, in threatening to appeal to the King, the remaining adherents of Mrs. Hutchinson were required to give up the arms and ammunition in their possession, and were forbidden, upon penalty of a fine, to buy or borrow any others, until permitted by the Court.* By this order, nearly sixty of the citizens of Boston, and many in the adjacent towns, were deprived of the right to keep fire-arms, enjoyed by the other inhabitants of the colony.

---

* Savage's *Winthrop*, Vol. 1. p. 247.

A large number of the people, who had been thus proscribed as heretics by the General Court, departed from Boston, under the guidance of John Clarke and William Coddington, with the intention of forming a settlement upon the shores of Delaware Bay. In their journey southward, they were kindly received and "lovingly entertained," at Providence, by Roger Williams, who advised them to settle on Narragansett Bay, and recommended either Sowams* or Aquetneck as a suitable site for their plantation. In order to ascertain whether these places came within the patents of the neighboring colonies, the emigrants sent Mr. Williams, with a deputation of their company, to Plymouth, to make the necessary inquiries. At Plymouth they were told, that Sowams was "the garden of their patent," and were advised to go to Aquetneck, where they might plant a colony, and be free from the jurisdiction of any of their neighbors. Accordingly, on the return of the embassy to Providence, the emigrants decided to abandon their journey southward, and settle upon the beautiful island, whose luxuriant soil and salubrious climate spread their attractions before them. They obtained a grant

* Sowams is now Barrington. Aquetneck was named *Isle of Rhodes*, or *Rhode Island*, in 1644, as is supposed from some resemblance to the Island of Rhodes in the Mediterranean Sea. *R. I. Hist. Coll.* Vol. IV. p. 88.

of the island from the chiefs of the Narragansetts, to whom it belonged, and at the end of March, 1638, commenced the settlement at Portsmouth, near its northern extremity. The price paid to the sachems was forty fathoms of white beads. In addition to this, the settlers bought the lands of the native occupants, in some instances paying for them twice over, to satisfy conflicting claims; so that, with the presents that were given, and the money that was paid, the purchase is said to have been one of the dearest that had then been made of lands in New England.

In negotiating the purchase of Rhode Island, the settlers were mainly dependent upon the exertions of Mr. Williams, who, upon this occasion, displayed the same obliging spirit, which always animated him, when the interests of others were to be promoted, or their rights maintained. His sympathies were strongly enlisted in behalf of the exiled band, who had separated from their brethren in Massachusetts for opinion's sake, and he lent the aid of his powerful influence with the Indian princes, in procuring for them a spot whereon to build a home. It was undoubtedly by his exertions, aided by the honored name of Sir Henry Vane, that the grant of Rhode Island was first obtained; and it was at his suggestion, that the liberal compensations and

gratuities were paid to the natives, which secured to the colonists a peaceful possession, and rendered their commonwealth so flourishing and happy. He has left an account of his agency in this transaction, in a letter, written in 1658, at a period when, in consequence of the questions which had been raised, he judged it "not unseasonable to declare the rise and bottom of the planting of Rhode Island."

"It was not price, nor money," says he, "that could have purchased Rhode Island. It was obtained by love; by the love and favor which that honorable gentleman, Sir Henry Vane, and myself, had with that great sachem, Miantonomo, about the league, which I procured between the Massachusetts English and the Narragansetts, in the Pequot war. It is true, I advised a gratuity to be presented to the sachem and to the natives; and because Mr. Coddington and the rest of my loving countrymen were to inhabit the place, and to be at the charge of the gratuities, I drew up a writing in Mr. Coddington's name, and in the names of such of my loving countrymen as came up with him, and put it into as sure a form as I could at that time, for the benefit and assurance of the present and future inhabitants of the island."

Here, upon the most beautiful and fertile island along the coast of New England, beyond

the jurisdiction of a jealous court, amidst the refreshing breezes and the varying scenery of the ocean, did the persecuted heretics of Massachusetts at length dwell in quiet; "an outcast people from the over-zealous colonies," as they styled themselves, "bearing with the several judgments and consciences of each other." The little colony thrived beneath the favorable influences of its genial situation, and the spiritua. freedom guarantied to its inhabitants soon extended itself to the southern shores of the island, and to the other islands of the bay. This secluded settlement was the retreat of Mrs. Hutchinson; where, having a more limited theatre of action, and removed from those who denounced her views, and especially from a civil authority that asserted jurisdiction in matters of opinion, she laid aside her character of theological reformer, and led the quiet life of a private lady; as, perhaps, she might always have done, had not her peculiar opinions, and her early departure from womanly propriety, been magnified to undue importance by the indiscreet censures of the over-zealous ministers and magistrates of Massachusetts.

The eventful life of this celebrated woman was brought to a close so melancholy and tragical, as, at any other period than one of extraordinary bigotry and severity, would have

changed every feeling of anger and resentment into pity and sorrow. On the death of her husband, in 1642, she removed her residence to Long Island, where, in the year following, she was murdered by the Indians, with her whole family, comprising sixteen persons, with the exception of one daughter, who was carried away into an unknown captivity. Her tragical death, and the extinction of her family, served but to confirm her enemies in Massachusetts in their convictions of her wickedness, and the justice of their proceedings against her. They were confidently regarded as a revelation of the judgment of God against her destructive heresies, which, even in the distant wilderness to which she had fled, could not escape the righteous retributions of Heaven.

Such is ever the spirit of intolerance. It narrows and dwarfs the intellect by the fallacies it employs, and the suspicions it engenders. It steels the heart, and crushes its generous sympathies, and converts even the misfortunes and sufferings of its victims into justifications of its own severities.

The events, which we have thus narrated, had an important influence upon the affairs of the settlement at Providence, and the narration of them was necessary in order to illustrate the spirit of the time, and the character of the in-

dividual whose life we are tracing. They present his character and principles in striking contrast with those of the other leading men of that day. They imposed upon him offices of disinterested benevolence, the performance of which must have engrossed his attention and consumed his time, even while the support of his family and the interests of his colony were subjects of pressing solicitude. The arbitrary proceedings, adopted by the government of Massachusetts Bay against Mrs. Hutchinson and her adherents, drove from that colony many of its citizens, and in this manner contributed largely to the growth of the plantations at Providence, where the refugees were sure to be welcomed with a ready and generous hospitality. The offspring of Massachusetts, it thus became the home of the disaffected and the banished, whom she had cast out from her citizens. It could hardly be expected that the persons, whom she had thus driven into exile, would entertain very favorable opinions of the justice of the proceedings against them. A letter written from Providence, and complaining of the acts of the General Court, and the prevailing spirit of the colony, was brought to the notice of the authorities. In consequence of this, it was ordered, that, if any one of the settlers at Providence should be found within the jurisdiction of Massachusetts

he should be brought before one of the magistrates, and, if he gave his sanction to the letter, he should be sent home, and forbidden to come again into the jurisdiction, upon pain of imprisonment and further censure.*

Acts like this, however, seem to have produced no change in the spirit or conduct of Williams. He still exerted himself on every occasion to preserve the peace of New England, to maintain the rights of the natives, and to conciliate their good-will towards all the colonies. His spirit and conduct are well exemplified in the course, which he pursued with respect to the murder of an Indian, near Pawtucket, by four Englishmen, who had been servants in Plymouth, and had absconded from their masters. The murderers fled to Providence, where they were, at first, kindly received by Mr. Williams, who was as yet ignorant of their crime. They had scarcely departed, when intelligence was brought him of the murder, and of the excitement and alarm it produced among the Indians. He immediately despatched messengers for the apprehension of the men, and repaired himself to the spot, where the murdered man was found, and received from him, just as he was dying, an account of the affair. The men

* Winthrop, Vol. I. p. 256.

were soon apprehended, and brought to Providence; and, by the advice of Governor Winthrop, they were carried to Plymouth, within whose jurisdiction the crime had been committed. One of them subsequently escaped; but the remaining three were tried and executed, in the presence of Mr. Williams and some Indians of the tribe, to which the murdered man belonged, whom he invited to accompany him to witness the justice which white men awarded to the murderer of an Indian.

Conduct like this, in vindication of the rights of the natives, and in promoting the peace and happiness of all the inhabitants of the country, did not fail to secure the abiding confidence of the Indian chiefs. In every question that arose between them and the English, he was made their adviser, and often became the mediator between the parties. In the year 1640, there were rumors abroad of new mischiefs plotting among the Indians. The Governor of Massachusetts strengthened the defences of the colony, and sent an agent to the Narragansetts, to ascertain the truth of the rumors, and to invite the sachem to Boston, for the purpose of renewing a good understanding with the authorities. The reports were all denied by Miantonomo, who expressed his readiness to come to Boston, provided Mr. Williams could accompany

him as his friend and adviser. But the Court of Massachusetts refused to relax their sentence of banishment against him, even to allow a temporary visit to the colony, on an errand so disinterested and important to its peace and well-being.

The sternness with which Massachusetts adhered to the letter of the sentence, and the act of exclusion which she passed against all the inhabitants of Providence, operated exceedingly to their disadvantage. Boston was then the principal mart of trade in New England, and, by the act of the Court, those who had been forbidden to enter Massachusetts were obliged to forego many of the comforts of life, which could only be obtained there, as well as the profits of the trade they might have carried on with the inhabitants. Roger Williams himself complains, that many thousand pounds would not repay the losses he sustained in being thus debarred from commerce with the English and natives of Massachusetts. In referring to this period of his life, he says his "time was spent day and night, at home and abroad, on the land and water, at the hoe and at the oar, for bread." He was poor, and obliged to labor constantly for his support; and, even with his utmost exertions, in those early times, he and his fellow-settlers at Providence must often have been reduced to privations and suf-

ferings, which their prosperous and wealthy descendants can now but inadequately conceive.

Among the turbulent spirits, whose erratic career was connected with the life of Roger Williams, was Samuel Gorton, a wild and restless enthusiast, who arrived at Boston in 1636. He soon removed to Plymouth, where, falling into a difficulty with the minister and the authorities, he was sentenced to pay a fine, and to give bonds for his subsequent good behavior. From Plymouth, he went to Rhode Island, where it is stated, though upon insufficient grounds, that he was tried as a disturber of the peace, and condemned to be publicly whipped. He at length came to Providence, where Roger Williams, with his usual humanity, received him to his hospitality, and offered him a shelter. Here he soon became the occasion of no small difficulty to the inhabitants, whose simple compact of voluntary association rendered social feuds of easy growth. The town was already distracted by the disputes, which had grown out of the division of the lands, and the ambiguous language in which the title was originally conveyed to Williams.

Gorton, having purchased a tract of land at Pawtuxet, in the south part of the Providence purchase, was soon joined by some of his adherents, who had been disfranchised at Newport

A quarrel immediately sprang up between them and the inhabitants of Providence, which long disturbed the peace of the colony, and came well nigh ending in violence and bloodshed. The parties became exasperated, and went forth against each other with arms, bent upon settling the controversy by blows. But Mr. Williams, mortified at the existence of so disgraceful a feud, pacified the combatants, and persuaded them to retire without violence. Yet this did not settle the strife. No arbitration could allay the stormy passions which had been excited. The infant colony, at that time without a government, and under no control save that of the popular sentiment, was completely distracted by the controversy. In this state of things, a few individuals of the weaker party sent an appeal to Massachusetts for aid, in settling the peace of the colony. The application was refused; but the act itself prepared the way for a series of attempts, on the part of Massachusetts, to usurp the control of affairs at Providence, until, at length, she asserted absolute jurisdiction over the whole settlement.

To this proceeding of his fellow-planters Mr. Williams seems never to have given the slightest sanction, though the opposite has been frequently affirmed. He was opposed to the principles of Gorton, and was displeased with his

conduct; yet he would not withhold from him the hospitality and shelter he sought. He evidently regarded him as a man of troublesome opinions and wayward impulses, but not on this account to be driven from the colony. Accordingly, Gorton was allowed to purchase land at Providence, though he never signed the compact by which the inhabitants bound themselves to each other; a circumstance which renders his conduct still more ungrateful and reprehensible.

A year or two later, the feud still remaining unabated, four of the residents at Pawtuxet, who were opposed to Gorton, gave in their allegiance to Massachusetts, in order that he might be brought to punishment. The authorities of the Bay, in those days, were seldom very scrupulous about extending their jurisdiction, and immediately began to exercise the prerogatives of government over the citizens of Providence. Gorton and his adherents obeyed the dictates of prudence, and removed beyond the Pawtuxet River, the southern boundary of Providence, to Shawomet, or Warwick, where they purchased lands of the natives, and commenced a settlement. But the authorities of Massachusetts were not thus to be defeated. They set up a plea of jurisdiction even here, and sent an armed force, with orders to seize Gorton, and bring

him to Boston for trial. The trial, which proceeded on a general charge of his being an enemy of religion, and a disturber of the peace, terminated in a severe sentence, by which he and his associates were doomed to imprisonment during the winter, and compelled to hard labor with an iron chain bolted fast upon their limbs.

These unfortunate men, whose only crimes were their wild and fanatical opinions, were separated from each other, and imprisoned in solitude in several of the towns about Boston; they were forbidden, upon penalty of death, to speak to any one save an officer of the church or of the colony; and, at the close of a dreary winter's confinement, barely escaping with their lives, were banished from Massachusetts. Gorton, accompanied by two of his associates, afterwards went to England, where they represented their wrongs to the Earl of Warwick and the Commissioners for the Plantations, and obtained from them a full recognition of their title to the lands at Shawomet, and an order to the authorities of Massachusetts to allow them unmolested possession of their rights.

These events were eminently fitted to suggest lessons and reflections, which did not fail to affect the sagacious mind of Mr. Williams. He had already had abundant opportunities of learn-

ing the arbitrary and inquisitorial spirit of the neighboring colony; but he probably had not before been fully aware of the tendency to tumult and trouble existing among the members of his own settlement, or of the absolute necessity of some more efficient organization than the simple bond of a common faith in the same principles of civil freedom, and the compact of town fellowship, which had hitherto bound them together. In connection also with subsequent proceedings on the part of the other colonies of New England, these events prepared the way for important changes in the affairs of Providence, which opened new spheres for the benevolent enterprises and exertions of its founder.

They also illustrate, as fully as records can do it, the difficulties with which the heterodox colony was so long obliged to contend, and are sufficient to satisfy every candid reader, that Massachusetts Bay had but slender claims upon the gratitude of her offspring for any assistance she rendered, in relieving the necessities or mitigating the trials incident to an infant settlement in the wilderness.

CHAPTER X.

The New England Confederacy. — The Colonies in Rhode Island excluded. — They appeal to the King. — Williams is appointed their Agent, and sails for England. — Obtains a Charter. — Publishes the "Bloody Tenet." — He returns to Rhode Island with the Charter. — His Reception at Providence. — His Pacification of the Indians. — Organization of a Government under the Charter. — Spirit of its early Legislation.

The year 1643 was rendered memorable by the establishment of the earliest confederacy among the colonies of New England. It was a union of great importance to the interests of those embraced in it, and may be regarded as, in some sort, the germ of the subsequent confederations which have marked the history of the American people. The objects which were proposed in its formation were mutual protection against the depredations of the Indian tribes, who were now every year becoming more formidable by their acquisition of fire-arms, and against the encroachments of the Dutch and the French, whose plantations skirted the settlements of the English, together with

the preservation of the liberty and peace of the gospel, and the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The league, which contained the articles of the union, was signed at Boston, on the 19th of May, by the commissioners of the several colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and New Haven.

By the terms of the confederacy, it was arranged that two commissioners should be annually chosen by each colony, to meet successively at Boston, Hartford, New Haven, and Plymouth, once in a year, or oftener, if the exigencies of the times should require, who should form a kind of central government, with power to determine all questions relating to war and peace, and provide for the general administration of justice, and the common welfare of all the colonies. The independence, however, of each of the several governments was strictly preserved; for the local jurisdiction remained unimpaired, and the commissioners, in reality, could do little more than discuss the matters submitted to them, and recommend, for the adoption of the colonies, the measures they might deem expedient. They had no power to enforce a single decree, or to alter or annul a single proceeding of the colonial assemblies.

The colony at Providence, formed, as it had

been, principally of the outcast and banished from the other settlements of New England, was not invited to join the confederacy; and her subsequent application for admission, like that of the settlers on Rhode Island, was sternly refused. The reason alleged at the time was the want of a regular charter of government, though, from the fact that, when this objection was removed, the refusal was still persisted in, we may well infer that other considerations determined the action of the confederate colonies. The entire separation of religion from the control of the civil power, and the catholic and tolerant spirit which characterized the inhabitants of Providence, were peculiarly offensive to their neighbors, and undoubtedly constituted the principal cause of the exclusion of the colony from the New England confederacy. The spirit which banished Roger Williams from Massachusetts had lost none of its sternness and severity, and would now regard with no favorable disposition the plantations which embodied his principles, and were growing up beneath his care. The inhabitants of Providence were thus left exposed to all the inconveniences and dangers incident to an isolated position, among barbarians on the one hand, and powerful and united neighbors on the other. In every emergency, they

must rely on their own resources, and trust to their own unaided strength. Had the little state, stung by this ingratitude and humiliation, retaliated the injuries she had received, it would have been no extraordinary act, and would have found, at least, some palliation in the political necessities to which she was reduced. So great was the influence of her founder with the Indians, that their friendship might easily have been withdrawn from the other colonies, and her admission to the confederacy been compelled by the troubles she might thus have occasioned them.

No such spirit, however, was harbored in the minds of Williams and his associates. Their influence, while it was able to protect their colony amidst the perils which threatened its existence, was exerted, in every instance, to appease the vengeance of the savages, and protect the lives and interests of their countrymen; and, had their views been oftener regarded, the early annals of New England might have been free from, at least, some of the blots that now darken their pages.

The increasing prosperity of the colonies at Providence, and on Rhode Island, together with their exclusion from the confederacy, and the frequent declarations made by their enemies, that they had no authority for civil govern-

ment, at length induced them to unite in seeking the favor and protection of the mother country. The mission was intrusted to Mr. Williams. It was one of considerable difficulty, and of vast importance; for upon its successful accomplishment depended even the existence of the colony. He accepted the high trust thus committed to him, and, by reason of his exclusion from the territories of Massachusetts, proceeded to New York, to embark for England. And here, while waiting for the ship to go to sea, an opportunity was presented him to exert his influence with the Indians, and save the colony at Manhattoes from a desolating war. The Indians of Long Island, exasperated by the wanton cruelties of the Dutch, had risen against them in great fury. They had burned the house and murdered the family of Mrs. Hutchinson, and assaulted the dwelling of Lady Moody, an inhabitant of the island, who had lately removed from Massachusetts. It was by the intercession of Williams, and that peculiar influence, which, more than any other man, he possessed with the Indians, that their fury was appeased, and peace restored to the settlements of the Dutchmen.

In the course of the summer of 1643, he set sail from New York for his native land. Of the length or the incidents of the voyage he has

left no written account. He beguiled its weari some days by preparing a "KEY TO THE INDIAN LANGUAGES," which he drew up, as he says, "as a private help to my own memory, that I might not, by my present absence, lightly lose what I had so dearly bought in some few years' hardship and charges among the barbarians." It was published soon after his arrival in England, and was the first attempt which had then been made to explain, in English, the language and manners of the North American Indians. It contains much valuable information, and is still regarded as one of the best expositions of the subjects to which it relates.

Mr. Williams arrived in England in the midst of the civil war which then distracted the nation, and but a short time after the popular party had seen Hampden, the purest and noblest of their leaders, cut down by the foe on the field of Chalgrove. The fate of the English monarchy was suspended on the crisis. The nation was hurried on through a series of tumultuous events. The Parliament gained the ascendency; Charles the First was sent to the scaffold, and the ambition of Cromwell found a way for the accomplishment of its vast schemes of aggrandizement. This disturbed state of public affairs was, on the whole, favorable to the objects of Mr. Williams. The Parliament, as yet

distrustful of their position, and uncertain respecting the issues of the revolution they had set on foot, were willing to conciliate the favor of the colonies, and intrusted their affairs to the administration of the Earl of Warwick, as Governor-General and Lord High Admiral of the colonies in America, with a council composed of five peers and twelve commoners. Among the commoners who sat at the council-board of the Earl of Warwick was Sir Henry Vane, the early friend of Roger Williams, and his illustrious compeer in advocating the doctrines of religious freedom. By him Mr. Williams was received with a cordial welcome, and presented to the commissioners of the colonies, who listened to his views with marked attention, and, in the name of the King, granted him a charter for the towns of Providence, Portsmouth, and Newport, to be entitled "The Incorporation of Providence Plantations in the Narragansett Bay in New England." The instrument bore the date of March 14th, 1644, and conveyed to the inhabitants of these towns full power and authority to adopt such a form of civil government, and "to make and ordain such civil laws and constitutions, as they, or the greatest part of them, shall by free consent agree unto." The charter distinctly recognized the principle on which the colony was founded,

and which the inhabitants had carefully cherished, that government should concern civil things alone; and within this sphere it imposed no limitation, save only that the ordinances that might be adopted should not conflict with the laws of England.

During his residence in England, notwithstanding the engrossing nature of his mission, and the civil strifes that were raging around him, Mr. Williams found leisure to write and publish his famous book called "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience." In this, the ablest of his works, in the form of a dialogue between Truth and Peace, he discusses the doctrines of religious freedom, for which he had always contended, and in the maintenance of which he had made so many sacrifices. The work was printed in London, without the author's name, in 1644. It was dedicated to the High Court of Parliament, and from the beauties of its style, and the great interest of the subject, was fitted to command unusual attention, especially at that early dawn of intellectual liberty in England. Mr. Cotton, of Boston, wrote a reply, which, in accordance with the quaint and singular taste of the age, he entitled "The Bloody Tenet washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb." After some time, Mr. Williams published a rejoinder,

which, in the same style then so common in theological writings, he called "The Bloody Tenet yet more bloody by Mr. Cotton's Endeavor to wash it white."

The question at issue between these two eminent disputants has long since been decided on the side of Mr. Williams, by the general voice of the Protestant world; and the writings to which it gave rise now only serve to show how far he strode before even the most gifted spirits of his time in the perception and assertion of the rights of the soul. Though the writings of Cotton and of Williams conduct the reader to widely different conclusions, and are distinguished from each other by marked characteristics, yet the controversy, on both sides, was conducted in a spirit of courtesy and candor unusual in that age of bitter strife and severe personalities.

The errand of Mr. Williams in England was now accomplished, and in the summer of 1644 he embarked for America. Thirteen years had passed since he first set sail, a youthful emigrant to the untried settlements of the new world. How changed was now his condition! He had suffered persecution at the hands of his brethren, and tasted the bitterness of a wintry exile; but he had also become the father of a new colony, which embodied a great prin-

ciple of civil society, now for the first time put in practice; and he was bearing with him across the Atlantic a charter, which guarantied its existence and exercise for ever. He arrived at Boston on the 17th of September, 1644, and landed in the forbidden territory of Massachusetts Bay, by virtue of the following letter which had been given to him in England, signed by several members of both houses of Parliament, and addressed "to the Governor and Assistants, and the rest of our worthy friends in the Plantation of Massachusetts Bay, in New England."

"OUR MUCH HONORED FRIENDS,

"Taking notice, some of us of long time, of Mr. Roger Williams's good affections and conscience, and of his sufferings by our common enemy and oppressors of God's people, the prelates, as also of his great industry and travels in his printed Indian labors, in your parts, (the like whereof we have not seen extant from any part of America,) and in which respects it hath pleased both houses of Parliament to grant unto him, and friends with him, a free and absolute charter of civil government for those parts of his abode, and withal sorrowfully resenting, that, amongst good men, (our friends,) driven to the ends of the world, exercised with the trials of a wilderness, and

who mutually give good testimony each of the other, (as we observe you do of him, and he abundantly of you,) there should be such a distance; we thought it fit, upon divers considerations, to profess our great desires of both your utmost endeavors of nearer closing, and of ready expressing those good affections (which we perceive you bear to each other) in effectual performance of all friendly offices. The rather because of those bad neighbors you are likely to find too near you in Virginia, and the unfriendly visits from the west of England, and from Ireland. That however it may please the Most High to shake our foundations, yet the report of your peaceable and prosperous Plantations may be some refreshings to your true and faithful friends."

This letter was delivered to the authorities of Massachusetts, but it wholly failed to soften their temper towards Mr. Williams, further than to allow him to proceed unmolested to Providence. The magistrates, says Hubbard, upon the receipt of the letter, examined their hearts, but saw no reason to condemn themselves for their former proceedings against him. The heretical colony, now that it had received a charter from the Council, and its founder had been applauded and honored by some of the leading

members of the government in England, was an object of even greater distrust and suspicion than before. The heresies, which the fathers of Massachusetts had so often attempted to destroy, seemed now secure beneath the protection of a separate government, and, in their estimation, were clothed with greater importance and power of mischief.

But new honors awaited the return of Mr. Williams to his own colony. The news of his arrival at Boston had gone before him, and, as he proceeded on his journey homeward, along the scenes he once traversed as an exile, he found the waters of the Seekonk covered with canoes, containing the whole population of Providence, who had come out to welcome his return and bear him back in triumph. It was a fitting expression of the gratitude and esteem in which the citizens of the colony held the character and services of its founder and greatest benefactor.

The inhabitants of the several settlements, embraced in the charter of Mr. Williams, were not prepared to enter at once upon the organization of a common government, in accordance with its provisions. Many local questions were to be decided, and jarring interests were to be harmonized. Besides this, the distracted state of affairs in England created party divisions among the colonists of America. In this way

the hopes and plans of Mr. Williams were deferred. But his services, as the pacificator of the Indians, were again immediately put in requisition, in settling the difficulties which had sprung up, in his absence, between the colonies and the Narragansetts. Miantonomo, the sachem of the tribe, the early and tried friend of the fathers of Rhode Island, had been put to death in circumstances which gave to the deed the aspect of wanton cruelty and injustice. In violation of an existing treaty, he had made war upon Uncas, the Mohegan chief, and was defeated and taken prisoner in battle. The conqueror carried the Narragansett warrior to Hartford, where he placed him in prison, and submitted his fate to the commissioners of the United Colonies. It was in their power to save him, had such been their inclination; but they asked the advice of "five of the most judicious elders," who, seeing in the unfortunate sachem not only the violator of the treaty, but the friend of Roger Williams and Samuel Gorton, gave their opinion that he deserved to die. The commissioners accepted the decision, and Miantonomo was escorted, by a guard of soldiers, into the territory of the Mohegans, where he was put to death by Uncas, in the presence of some English, who were sent to witness the shameful deed. Had this act been the simple dictate of

barbarian revenge, it would have occasioned no surprise to those who are familiar with the stern customs of savage warfare; but that it should have been sanctioned and advised by Christian ministers, even at this distant day mantles the cheek with a blush of shame, at the weakness of principle and the bitterness of feeling which it betrays.

It was not strange that the tribe burned to avenge the murder of their chief, for whose ransom, they alleged, they had paid the wampum which was stipulated. They soon commenced a war with the Mohegans, which they also threatened to extend to all the colonies of New England, except those at Providence and on Rhode Island, to which they had always been friendly, and from which, in return, they had received nothing but kindness. The commissioners held an extraordinary session in Boston, at which they received a letter from Roger Williams, informing them of the hostile determinations of the Narragansetts. No time was to be lost. It was immediately ordered, that three hundred men be sent to the aid of the Mohegans, the allies of the English. Two messengers were also despatched to the Narragansetts, to appease, if possible, their vengeance and prevent the war.

The sachems of the tribe had already sent for Mr. Williams to advise them; and, on the arrival

of the messengers, he acted as their interpreter, and united his influence with theirs to allay the hostile passions of the natives. By his mediation, Passacus, the brother and successor of Miantonomo, was induced to go to Boston, attended by other chiefs of the tribe, where he concluded a treaty with the commissioners, which crushed forever the power, the independence, and the pride of the Narragansetts. The treaty was concluded on the 4th of August, 1645. By its provisions, the sachems agreed to pay to the commissioners two thousand fathoms of wampum, as a remuneration for the expenses of the war, and left at Boston a child of Passacus, together with the children of some others of the chiefs, as hostages of their fidelity. Thus, again, were the settlements of New England saved from the desolations of Indian war, mainly by the disinterested exertions and great personal influence of Mr. Williams.

The several towns of the Providence Plantations at length agreed on a form of government, framed in accordance with the powers granted to them in the charter. It was adopted in a general assembly of the people of the colony, held at Portsmouth, in May, 1647; and, among its leading provisions, it required the annual election of a President and four assistants, in

whom should be vested the executive power, and who should constitute the Supreme Court of trials for all cases of appeal from the local authorities of the towns. The legislative Assembly was composed of six commissioners, from each of the towns, who should make laws, and order all the general affairs of the colony; but, so jealous were the people of the exercise of any delegated authority, that the towns reserved to themselves the power of annulling any law, which their representatives might pass. The organization of the new government was a consummation of great importance in the history of the little colony; and to bring it about had enlisted the strongest interests and efforts of Mr. Williams. He strenuously sought to remove the petty jealousies, which the settlements had been in the habit of indulging towards each other, and to heal the divisions by which the people, composed as they were of many discordant spirits and tenacious consciences, had long been distracted. It was, undoubtedly, in accordance with his own counsels, and to remove every occasion of complaint on the part of the inhabitants of Rhode Island, that the office of President of the colony, which so naturally belonged to himself, was bestowed upon Mr. John Coggeshall, of Newport, at the first General

Assembly of election, while he accepted the humbler place of assistant for the town of Providence.

Among the acts passed at this first meeting of the colonial Assembly, was a resolution making honorable mention of the services of Mr Williams in negotiating the charter, and, "in regard to his so great trouble, charges, and good endeavors," granting him the sum of one hundred pounds, to be levied upon the three towns of the province, viz., fifty pounds from Newport, thirty pounds from Portsmouth, and twenty pounds from Providence. Inadequate as this compensation was to remunerate him even for the actual expenses incurred in his important mission, the whole of the sum was never paid. The poverty of the people may be pleaded as some slight extenuation of so gross neglect; but it is to be feared, that, in consequence of the party divisions, which then existed in the colony, as well as of the imperfect authority with which the government was invested, the obligations of public indebtedness were but slightly felt, and reluctantly acknowledged.

At the same general meeting of the colony was adopted a code of laws, fashioned, in the main, after the existing laws of England, but strictly confining its regulations to civil things alone, and expressly declaring, in one of its pro-

visions, that "otherwise than in what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the fear of his God."

Such were the early government and the legislation of Rhode Island. It was the simple embodiment of the principles of her founder, and displays a spirit of freedom, and a practical wisdom, that stand out in bold contrast with the prevailing views of the older colonies, and would do honor to the statesmen and legislators of any age.

CHAPTER XI.

Private Life of Williams. — Dissensions in Rhode Island. — Coddington's Commission. — Oppressive Policy of the United Colonies. — Treatment of John Clarke and others in Massachusetts. — Dissatisfaction with Coddington. — Williams and Clarke are appointed Agents of the Colony. — They sail for England.

During the years through which we have followed the fortunes of Mr. Williams up to the present point, some important changes had taken place in his private affairs. The character of

minister of the gospel, in which he first appeared in New England, and in which he was banished from Massachusetts, had been gradually laid aside. It is probable, that he had not wholly ceased from preaching; but, some alteration having taken place in his views of the Christian ministry, and the affairs of the colony having almost constantly occupied his attention, he seems never to have held, for any length of time after his removal to Providence, the office of teacher of a church. His family, too, had been gradually increased by the births of six children, all of whom were now of a tender age. In order to provide for the support of his family, as well as to repair the fortunes, which persecution and sacrifice had impoverished, soon after his return from England he erected a trading-house, in the country of the Narragansetts, at which he now spent the greater part of his time. Here, for many years, he carried on an honorable traffic with the Indians, and, at the same time, instructed them in the truths of Christianity, and acted as their adviser in all their diplomacy with the settlements around them.

He was still, however, regarded as a citizen of Providence, and, as such, was successively elected to many of the highest offices of the town and the colony, and found frequent oc-

casions on which to put forth his exertions for their welfare. The petty strifes and local feuds, which had so long delayed the organization of government under the charter, were not wholly brought to an end by that event. The causes which gave rise to them are long since forgotten, and were, probably, in themselves exceedingly trivial and unimportant. The several towns of the province, settled as they had been mainly by refugees from the other colonies, comprised persons of every form of religious faith, and every shade of political opinion. They early became the asylum of all sorts of consciences, so that, as was reproachfully said, if a person had lost his conscience, he might be sure to find it in some of the towns of Rhode Island. Among a population so promiscuously collected, it is not strange that some should have mistaken the true idea of religious freedom, and extended the shield of conscience over matters and opinions with which it had no proper connection. The harmony of Providence was early disturbed, in this way, by the quarrels of troublesome and heady persons, who grew restive beneath the wholesome restraints that were imposed upon them. From all such strifes, however, Mr. Williams appears to have studiously kept aloof; for his name is seldom mentioned in connection with them, save when he

steps forward to calm the agitated waters, and enjoin harmony upon the excited and turbulent citizens. His efforts were often crowned with success, though he frequently had the mortification of seeing the principles of religious freedom, which, in his own mind, were clearly separated from all licentiousness, ridiculously perverted to justify the silliest absurdities of opinion, or the most irregular extravagances of conduct.

One of the principal difficulties, which, at this time, disturbed the peace of the colony, arose from the extraordinary proceedings of Mr. Coddington, the leading inhabitant of the Island of Rhode Island. From the very organization of the government under the charter, he arrayed himself in the opposition, and seems to have left no effort untried to overturn and destroy it. Uniting with himself a faction composed probably of persons accustomed to take their opinions from him, he first petitioned the colony of Plymouth to take the island under its jurisdiction; and when this application failed, notwithstanding he had been elected President, in the mean time he went to England, to endeavor to set aside the charter which Mr. Williams had procured, and destroy the union of the towns, which had been organized by its provisions. In this endeavor he was successful; though by what

representations he induced the Council of State, who then governed the country, so soon to annul the former instrument, has never been clearly understood. He returned in 1651, bringing with him a commission, erecting the islands of Rhode Island and Canonicut into a separate government, and also appointing him Governor, for life, of the new colony, with a Council to be nominated by the people and approved by himself.

The arrival of a *charter*, whose operation would inevitably destroy the existing government, and clothe a single individual with unwonted power, created no ordinary sensation among the towns of the province. In Newport and Portsmouth, especially, the excitement ran so high as almost to lead to violence, and the opposition, which Mr. Coddington encountered in the exercise of his new authority, was abundantly sufficient to show, that the whole proceeding was without the sanction, and contrary to the wishes, of a majority of the people. The effect of the measure, however, was, for a time, to sever the islands from the other towns of the colony, and to place them under the jurisdiction of a separate government.

But these internal dissensions were not the only troubles to which the Plantations at Providence were subjected. The several portions of the territory were still subjects of the pressing

claims of the other colonies; and that the little republic escaped the partitioning, which has so often been the destiny of feeble states, among powerful and ambitious neighbors, is to be attributed to the firmness and perseverance of her citizens, rather than to the forbearance or negligence of the colonies that surrounded her. Plymouth had at different times laid claim to the Island of Rhode Island. Massachusetts still asserted her jurisdiction over the people at Pawtuxet; and, soon after the return of Mr. Williams from England, she had sent him an order, while acting as President of the colony, forbidding him to exercise any of the functions of government, and alleging that the whole territory was hers, by virtue of a charter, which had been granted by the Parliament. Though these claims of Massachusetts were never allowed within the territory either of Providence or of Rhode Island, yet she did not fail to exercise her power, sometimes in a most despotic way, over the citizens of these colonies, whenever they were found within her own proper jurisdiction. Among the acts of her authorities towards these unoffending assertors of the freedom of conscience, the following are of so tyrannical a nature, as to remind the reader of the dark deeds recorded of the inquisition, in countries on which the light of the reformation has never shone

The Reverend John Clarke, Mr. Obadiah Holmes, and Mr. John Crandall, three citizens of Newport, were appointed, by the church at that place, to visit one William Witter, a member of that church, then resident at Lynn, who, on account of his great age, had requested a visit from his brethren, for the purpose of Christian intercourse and improvement. They proceeded in a peaceable manner, like Christian men, on this benevolent mission, and arrived at the house of Mr. Witter on Saturday. The next day being the Sabbath, Mr. Clarke was invited to preach at the house to the members of the family, and such of the neighbors as might chance to come in. While he was speaking from some text of the Bible relating to temptation, he was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of two constables, who silenced his preaching, and arrested him and his companions, by virtue of the following order, signed by one of the magistrates, viz.

"*By virtue hereof, you are required to go to the house of William Witter, and so to search from house to house for certain erroneous persons, being strangers, and them to apprehend, and in safe custody to keep, and to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, to bring before me.*"

They were detained, through the Sabbath, in

the custody of the officers, and on the following day were sent to Boston by the magistrate, and committed to prison. On being brought before the Court for trial, they were defended by Mr. Clarke, in a speech which not a little puzzled the Massachusetts magistrates, with the dilemmas which it proposed. "At length, however," says Mr. Clarke, "the Governor stepped up, and told us we had denied infant baptism, and, being somewhat transported, told me I had deserved death, and said he would not have such trash brought into their jurisdiction."

The trial resulted, as was to be expected, in the conviction of the prisoners, and they were sentenced by the Court to pay a fine, Mr. Clarke of twenty pounds, Mr. Holmes of thirty pounds, and Mr. Crandall of five pounds, or, in case of their refusal of payment, to be whipped. The fines they of course refused to pay, as they acknowledged neither the justice of the sentence nor the jurisdiction of the Court. They were accordingly remanded to prison, from which, after a few weeks, Mr. Clarke and Mr. Crandall, by the interposition of their friends, were set at liberty, and suffered to return to Newport. Mr. Holmes was detained longer, and at length, before being discharged, was whipped with thirty lashes upon his back, inflicted with unusual severity.

Proceedings like these, of which the early annals of Massachusetts furnish a melancholy list of examples, can be fully explained only by reminding the reader, that the victims of this inquisitorial power were regarded as heretics, and that, in the estimation of the Puritans of that colony, heresy was a crime before which every civil offence faded into comparative insignificance.* Mr. Clarke and his companions were Baptists, the disciples of a sect, which the fathers of Massachusetts had seen rapidly increasing among the people of the colony, in spite of the severe laws which they had promulgated against its tenets and its worship. These people had always been fostered in Rhode Island; and now, that any of their ministers had ventured to set up their persecuted worship on the soil of the Puritan commonwealth, though within the sanctuary of a private dwelling, and even without proclaiming any of their peculiar tenets, they were punished with the utmost rigors of the law. Two other persons also, who were present at the punishment of Mr. Holmes, and who expressed some sympathy with his sufferings, and admiration of the spirit with which he endured them, were immediately arrested by the

* For an account of these transactions, see Backus's *History of New England*, Vol. I. p. 207.

officers, and, when brought before the Court, were sentenced to a fine and imprisonment.

It would have been difficult for the authorities of Massachusetts to point out the particular law, which had been violated in either of these instances, in any of its literal provisions. It was enough for them, that the spirit of the whole legislation of the colony was opposed to heresy, and that the ministers sanctioned and commended all their measures for its suppression. Such was the zeal of the people, at that time, for defending the Puritan faith, that, when heretics were to be punished, the Court did not scruple to disregard all limits to their authority, and to overleap the bounds of their jurisdiction.

In this condition of the affairs of the colony, while the citizens were at variance with each other, and were subjected, without redress, to every species of tyranny and indignity, which their neighbors of Massachusetts chose to practise upon them, it was obvious to all that their only safety was to be found in maintaining the union of the towns, which had been formed under the charter of Mr. Williams. Amidst the conflicting claims, which the other colonies had interposed, it was clear that neither of the sections into which the province had been divided could long maintain an independent existence The Indians also, taking advantage of the dis-

sensions of the colonists, began to commit depredations, which the commissioners of the United Colonies were unwilling to prevent, and which the several towns were too feeble to punish.

The inhabitants of the islands in the bay, who had formerly opposed the measures of Mr. Coddington, now dreaded the prospect of being subjected to his power. His sympathies seem to have strongly inclined to the regal side of the great question, which then agitated the British empire, while those of the great body of the people had always been with the Parliament. And it is highly probable, that they entertained serious apprehensions that the administration of the new Governor, who owed his elevation not to the suffrages of the colony, but to the power of the Council in England, might prove unfavorable to popular rights and privileges. Their only hope, therefore, plainly lay in an appeal to the Council of State for the abrogation of Mr. Coddington's commission, and the restoration of the charter, which had been granted to Mr. Williams. With a full impression of these views, and very soon after the events which we have narrated above had occurred, nearly all the inhabitants of Newport, and a large number of those of Portsmouth, united in an attempt to accomplish this most desirable object, on which the very existence of their settlements seemed

to depend. They appointed Mr. John Clarke to proceed as their agent to England, and represent their condition to the Council, which then governed the country. The appointment was in every way a most fortunate one. He was a man of liberal education, and bland and courtly manners, and was fully acquainted with the affairs of the people he was appointed to represent, having resided among them for many years as a physician, and as a minister of the church at Newport.

At about the same time, and influenced doubtless by nearly the same considerations, the two towns of Providence and Warwick, which had still continued to maintain the government under the original charter, made proposals to Mr. Williams again to cross the Atlantic, and coöperate with Mr. Clarke, for the purpose of procuring the interposition of the Council in adjusting the difficulties, which had sprung up in the colony. These proposals he at first absolutely declined, though not from any diminution of his interest in the colony, but from reluctance again to leave his family, and his inability to incur the expense of so great an undertaking. It may be, too, that he was influenced by his former experience of the thankless nature of services rendered to the state, and called to mind the meagre and reluctant remuneration he had re-

ceived for his labors and expenditures in procuring the charter.

Such, however, were the importunities of the citizens, and such his own patriotic interest in the colony, over whose growth he had watched with parental care, that he at length accepted the appointment which was conferred upon him, and prepared again to embark for the shores of England. Some effort was made, among the inhabitants of the towns, to raise the funds necessary for defraying the expenses of the voyage. The measures which were devised, however, do not appear to have been effectual, for the adequate sum was not provided, and he was obliged to sell his trading-house in Narragansett, in order to obtain the means of making the voyage, and of supporting his family during his absence. In this act, which seems to have been the offspring of pure necessity, he not only relinquished the profits of the lucrative traffic he had been carrying on, amounting, as he says, to a hundred pounds per annum, but he also parted with what must have been his chief dependence for the livelihood of himself and his family. It is only when we thus consider the circumstances in which he was placed, that he was a husband and a father, surrounded by a large family, whose immediate wants he must supply, and for whose education and future well-

being he must make provision, that we can fully appreciate the disinterested spirit that impelled him to the sacrifices he made, and the labors he performed. It led him to disregard the limits of a narrow prudence, and to turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of mere personal interest, whenever an opportunity was presented of benefiting the colony he had founded, or of advancing the great principle for which he had contended and suffered.

At length, having completed the requisite preparations for his long absence from home, he joined Mr. Clarke at Boston, where they embarked together in November, 1651. It was not without considerable molestation and embarrassment from the authorities and people of Massachusetts, that Mr. Williams was allowed to pass through their territory for the purpose of taking ship for England. He alludes to these in his subsequent letters, though he furnishes us no means of judging of their nature or operation. Though no longer in any degree able either to harm the orthodoxy or disturb the peace of the colony, yet the authorities were opposed to the objects of his mission, and, it may be, dreaded the representations, which the envoys from Rhode Island had it in their power to make to the government of the mother country of the condition of New England. Taci-

tus, the great historian of the worst ages of the Roman republic, has remarked it as a principle of human nature, that we hate those whom we have injured; and the treatment which Roger Williams, while living, and which his memory, after he was dead, received from the colony that banished him, would seem to furnish some corroboration of the justness of the remark.

CHAPTER XII.

State of public Affairs in England. — Williams's Occupations while there. — Coddington's Commission revoked. — Letter of the General Assembly to Williams. — His Intercourse with Sir Henry Vane, Cromwell, and Milton. — His literary Labors. — His Return to Providence. — Reorganization of the Government. — He is elected President of the Colony.

We now find Mr. Williams a second time in England, in the service of the colony at Providence. The mother country was still in the midst of the momentous revolution, which had already commenced when he last visited her shores. The interval had been marked by

great events. The King, Charles the First, had been brought to the scaffold; the monarchy, the peerage, and the connection of the church with the government, had been abolished by law; and the Long Parliament, through its Council of State, ruled the realm of England. During the period of his residence there, another change, perhaps still more extraordinary, was added to those with which the age was crowded. Cromwell, impelled, it may be, by considerations of state necessity, as well as by motives of personal ambition, forcibly dissolved the Parliament, and from the ruins of the monarchy erected for himself a throne of even more than kingly power. The public mind was agitated to an unwonted degree by these astonishing changes; new theories of government were broached, and, as never fails to happen in these transition states of the social system, tumults and factions distracted the nation.

Of the events that marked the period, Roger Williams was no indifferent spectator; and we have reason to regret, that no other memorials have been preserved of his residence in England, than such as may be gleaned from the incidental allusions contained in the letters he wrote to his friends in America. These, though few in number, are yet sufficient to show that he was intimately acquainted with many of the

leading personages of the time, and must have been cognizant of much of its secret history, and the hidden springs of its stirring events. Soon after their arrival in England, Mr. Williams and Mr. Clarke presented a petition to the Council of State, in behalf of the colony they had come to represent. This was referred to a committee on foreign affairs for investigation and final decision. The envoys of Rhode Island encountered a strong opposition, in the prosecution of their objects, from some of the members of Parliament, from many of the ministers of both the Presbyterian and Independent churches, and other influential persons, most of whom were in the interest of the other colonies of New England. But they found an efficient and unwavering coadjutor in Sir Henry Vane, whose spirit and principles were kindred with those of Roger Williams, and who had early befriended the colony which he had founded as an asylum for the persecuted assertors of religious freedom. He was at this time at the height of his influence as a statesman, and in the full splendor of his prosperity. He was a prominent member of the Council, of which he had been chosen President, and held the high office of Treasurer and Commissioner of the Navy, in the exercise of which he administered nearly the whole foreign affairs of the common

wealth. And, more than all, in an age of fanaticism and revolution, when the wildest opinions were asserted, and the most reckless conduct justified, he was ever the fearless, unwavering advocate of regulated liberty, and the consistent, though earnest and enthusiastic exemplar of simple-hearted piety.

In the mean time, however, while the question was still pending, an order was passed by the Council of State vacating Mr. Coddington's commission, and confirming the charter which had formerly been granted to the colony, until a final adjudication of the case could be had. This measure, so favorable, and so full of promise to the interests he was seeking to promote, Mr. Williams, in his letter to the towns of Providence and Warwick, ascribes to the mediation of Sir Henry Vane with the Council, and speaks of him as, "under God, the sheet anchor of our ship." The order of the Council was brought to Newport in the early part of the year 1653, and contained directions to the several Plantations immediately to unite themselves again under the common government of the charter, as they had been before any obstruction to its authority had arisen. Such, however, were now the jealousies which had sprung up anew during the separation of the colony, that the order was not obeyed; and, though Mr. Coddington's rule

seems to have been brought to an end, yet the settlements on the island, and those on the main land, continued for a year and a half to maintain their separate governments.

Mr. Williams, with his associate, still remained in England, to watch the progress of events, and sustain the petition they had presented to the Council. The final adjustment of the claims of the colony was delayed in part by the war between England and Holland, which then engrossed the attention of the government, and also by the determined opposition which these claims encountered from the agents and influential friends of the other New England colonies. The two parties stood in the Parliament, and before the Council, according to the representation of Williams, "as two armies, ready to engage, observing the motions and postures each of the other, and yet shy of each other." During the absence of Mr. Williams, at a meeting of the General Assembly, held at Providence, a letter was addressed to him, expressing the thanks of the Assembly for his "care and diligence" in promoting the interests of the colony, and presenting their opinion, that, in case the charter should be finally renewed, "it might tend much to the weighing of men's minds, and subjecting of persons who have been refractory to yield themselves over as unto a set-

tled government, if it might be the pleasure of the honorable STATE to invest, appoint, and empower himself to come over as Governor of the colony, for the space of one year." An intimation like this, coming from men who had always been distinguished for their jealousy of every form of delegated power, was indeed remarkable, and conveys a strong expression of their confidence in his integrity, and their high appreciation of his services. His own wisdom, also, and the disinterested principles on which he acted, are not less strikingly illustrated in the fact, that he entirely disregarded so flattering a temptation to the acquisition of political power. The letters which he wrote to his townsmen while absent contain no aspirations for self-aggrandizement. The only solicitudes they express are for the welfare of his family, and the harmony and prosperity of the colony; and his most frequent admonitions were, "that no private respects, or gains, or quarrels, may cause them to neglect the public and common safety, peace, and liberties."

The character of Mr. Williams, and his position while in England, would naturally throw him into the society of some of the most distinguished men of the time. He spent a number of weeks at Belleau, the beautiful estate of Sir Henry Vane, in Lincolnshire, where he doubt-

less often mingled in that company of kindred minds, who used so frequently to assemble to discuss, with their illustrious leader, the deep questions of theology, or to devise plans for the happiness and security of the periled and distracted commonwealth. He was in habits of intimate association with Cromwell, who discussed with him the affairs of the state, and drew forth from him his views of the Indians, and his singular adventures among them, in the wilds of New England; with Harrison, the Major-General of the army; with Lawrence, the Lord President of the Council of State; and with many others in Parliament, and at the helm of public affairs. He also formed an intimate acquaintance with Milton, who was then Latin Secretary to the Council, and already rapidly rising to the zenith of his renown as a statesman and a poet. The *Paradise Lost* had not yet been written; but the republican bard had sung many of his sweetest sonnets, and had published in prose some of those noble vindications of liberty, "of which all Europe rang from side to side." Younger than Williams by more than nine years, he was now in the freshness of early manhood, and the full vigor of his great powers. The infirmities and disasters of his later life had not yet darkened the hopes or damped the ardor of his spirit. In their fre

quent companionship, with the interchange of congenial views, and the expression of common principles and aims, they appear to have mingled the study of languages and literature; and for the Dutch, which the poet acquired from the teachings of Williams, he opened, in return, the rich stores of his varied learning in many different tongues. In these high associations, and in the familiar conversations to which they naturally gave rise, he would, doubtless, often recur to his favorite themes, the inalienable freedom of the conscience, and the separation of religion from the civil power; and the free declaration of his opinions, and the simple narrative of his sufferings, must have exerted an important influence upon the eminent men in whose society he mingled, an influence, indeed, which history cannot now very distinctly trace, but which may have produced its results in the liberal policy of the Protector, and the lessons of toleration, which he enjoined upon the colonies in New England.

In dwelling upon these scenes and incidents of Mr. Williams's residence in England, one cannot fail to be reminded of the contrasts they present to the humble life he had so recently left. Yet, in this society of scholars and statesmen, with whose brilliant fortunes he might easily have identified his own, he did not forget the

colony with whose interests he was charged. His spirit was not elated, nor was his attention ever diverted from the objects he had left his home to accomplish. In order to obtain a livelihood while engaged in their prosecution, he devoted a portion of his time to the instruction of some young gentlemen in the languages, probably the sons of his friends, who, from a respect for his character, and a desire to aid his fortunes, furnished him with this occupation for his leisure hours. And it deserves to be mentioned, as a proof of his extensive scholarship, that he thus taught the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, and Dutch, some of them at least, "not by grammar rules," but, as he says himself, by *words, phrases, and constant talk, as we teach our children English.* He was also engaged in some philanthropic labors undertaken for the benefit of the poor in London, who had been reduced to the extremity of suffering by the civil wars, which then disturbed the nation.

The labors in the mining districts had been stopped amidst the tumults of the times, and the price of coals and every species of fuel had become so high, in the metropolis, as to place it utterly beyond the reach of the poorer classes of the people, who gave vent to their desperation in every kind of pillage and conflagration. The sympathies of Mr. Williams were excited

by their miserable condition, and he appears to have enlisted his personal services in the execution of the plans, which were devised for alleviating their sufferings and quieting their discontents. It was also during the same period, the winter of 1652, and while thus engaged in the service of the city and the Parliament, that he found leisure to prepare for the press, and to publish, his rejoinder to Mr. Cotton's answer to his "Bloody Tenet of Persecution," which he entitled "The Bloody Tenet yet more bloody by Mr. Cotton's Endeavor to wash it white." At about the same time, he also published his "Hireling Ministry none of Christ's; or, a Discourse touching the propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ," and his "Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health, and their Preservatives," two essays, mainly of a controversial character, relating to the questions of theology and church government, at that time so much discussed both in England and the colonies.

Early in the summer of 1654, Mr. Williams returned to Providence. The final determination of the question pertaining to the renewal of the charter had not yet been accomplished; but the accounts which he received of disagreements and troubles in the colony, together with the unprotected condition of his family, and the great expensiveness of a residence in

England, induced him to leave the remainder of the business in the hands of Mr. Clarke, and return to his turbulent and excited fellow-citizens, that, if possible, he might harmonize their differences, and establish the government he had labored so assiduously in instituting. He bore with him an order from the Lord Protector's Council, addressed to the authorities of Massachusetts, and requiring them to allow him, in future, either to land or to embark within their jurisdiction, without being molested. The order was obeyed, on his landing at Boston, by the Governor, Mr. Bellingham, under his own hand; but it was not till two years after, and then at his own repeated solicitation, that it was formally acknowledged by the General Court, and entered upon the records of the colony.

On his arrival at Providence, and his return to the bosom of his family, the first object which engaged his attention was the restoration of union among the several towns of the colony, and the reorganization of the government, in accordance with the order of the Council of State, passed two years before. To accomplish this, he soon perceived, was an undertaking of no common difficulty. Jealousies and feuds, grown inveterate by the lapse of time, still separated the towns from each other, and distracted the citizens among themselves. So predominant had

this narrow and selfish spirit become, among the people of Providence, that they seemed willing to forego, for the sake of its petty gratification, the whole advantage of colonial union, and even to call in question the disinterestedness and the value of the services, which Mr. Williams and his associate had rendered by their agency in England. Returning thus to a people, many of whom were too ignorant or too prejudiced to appreciate the blessings they enjoyed, it was not strange that he felt wounded at their ungrateful requital of his sacrifices, and seemed to himself to have been laboring in vain while engaged in their service.

Impressed with these considerations, very soon after his return, he addressed a calm and conciliatory letter to the citizens of Providence, in which he recounts with modesty, yet with great dignity and firmness, the sacrifices he had made in their behalf, for which he had "reaped nothing but grief, and sorrow, and bitterness." He laments, in earnest and pathetic language, the distractions of the colony, points out the perversities of temper in which they had their origin, and urges the citizens to bury their animosities, and unite themselves again in establishing the only government under which they could hope to maintain an independent existence. He also

presented to the town a letter from Sir Henry Vane, addressed to the inhabitants of the colony of Rhode Island, which he had brought with him from England. In this letter, the generous-minded writer mildly reproaches the colonists with their "headiness, tumults, disorders, and injustice, of which," says he, "the noise echoes into the ears of all, as well friends as enemies, by every return of ships from those parts," and strongly urges upon them the appointment of commissioners, in behalf of the several interests, that they thus "might put a stop to their growing breaches and distractions, silence their enemies, encourage their friends, and honor the name of God."

Persuasives like these, coming from the best friends of the colony, did not fail to produce a salutary effect upon the minds of the people of Providence. A meeting of the town was soon after held, at which commissioners were appointed to meet with those, who should be appointed from the other towns, for the purpose of reorganizing the government of the province. This conciliatory example was immediately followed by the three remaining towns, in which were appointed commissioners for the reunion of the colony. At length, on the 31st of August, 1654, a meeting of the commissioners of all the

towns was held, and the articles of union finally agreed upon. All laws, which had been enacted before the separation of the colony, were to remain in force until repealed by the legislature, and all local ordinances, which had been adopted by either portion of the colony, during the period of the separation, were still to be binding upon those who adopted them, so long as they should desire it.

Mr. Williams was also appointed, by the citizens of Providence, to prepare an answer, in behalf of the town, to the letter which Sir Henry Vane had addressed to the people of the colony. This service he readily undertook, and the admirable letter which he wrote has been preserved in the records of the town, bearing the date of August 27th, 1654. It breathes the spirit of elevated and generous patriotism, and was fitted not only to gratify and honor the person to whom it was addressed, but also to subdue the mutual resentments, and unite the discordant opinions, of those in whose name it was sent. Commencing with an expression of regret, on account of the recent retirement of Sir Henry from the councils of the commonwealth, he speaks of his "loving lines" to the colony, as "the sweet fruits of his rest;" "as when the sun retires his brightness from

the world, yet from under the clouds we perceive his presence, and enjoy his light, and heat, and sweet refreshing." He then proceeds to narrate the history of the troubles which had distracted the colony, points out the causes from which they sprang, and sets forth, in glowing terms, the blessings which the colonists have enjoyed, inasmuch as "they have drunk of the cup of as great liberties as any people under the whole heaven." The letter concludes with the earnest assurance, that the heart of their friend shall no more be saddened by their divisions and disorders, and, in the name of the whole colony, utters the hope "that, when we are gone and rotten, our posterity and children after us shall read, in our town records, your pious and favorable letters, and loving kindness to us, and this our answer, and real endeavor after peace and righteousness."

The first general election after the reorganization of the government was held at Warwick, on the 12th of September, at which Mr. Williams was chosen President of the colony. At the same meeting of the citizens of the several towns, he was also appointed, in behalf of the whole colony, in connection with Mr. Gregory Dexter, to draw up and send "letters of humble thanksgiving" to his Highness the Lord Pro-

tector, Sir Henry Vane, Mr. Holland, and Mr. John Clarke, all which he was requested to sign and seal in virtue of his office as President.

Thus was terminated the unhappy division of the settlements of Rhode Island; a division, which had extended through several years, and had nearly destroyed the independent existence of the colony. The auspicious union of the long-separated towns was evidently brought about mainly through the judicious and well-directed efforts of Mr. Williams. He had identified himself with the interests of the people among whom his lot was cast, and in their service he allowed no difficulties to daunt him, no ingratitude or folly to dishearten him. He succeeded in his exertions when most men would have been borne down by the opposition he met, or would have turned away in disgust with the narrow views and perverse tempers of those by whom he was surrounded.

CHAPTER XIII.

Character of his Administration. — He acts as Mediator between the United Colonies and the Indians. — Spirit of Disorder in the Colony. — Williams's Letter to the Town of Providence. — Conduct of William Harris. — Williams attempts to conciliate the other Colonies. — Their Efforts to compel Rhode Island to persecute the Quakers. — Her liberal Policy towards them.

The administration of Mr. Williams, as President of the colony, lasted for two years and a half, and was marked by many important incidents, though the scanty records of the times now afford but imperfect means for their illustration. The office which he held was at that time encompassed with more than ordinary difficulty and perplexity. The people of the several towns had, indeed, united themselves under a common jurisdiction; yet the public sentiment of the colony was still in an unsettled state, and its civil affairs were in such a condition as to render them most difficult of management. The government, which had been adopted under the provisions of the charter, had, from the beginning, been wanting in efficiency, and had proved

itself, in many respects, inadequate to the exigencies even of an infant society. The towns were severally too independent of each other, were bound together by too feeble ties, and possessed too many checks upon the colonial Assembly, readily to make those sacrifices of local interest, which the general good always demands. The colony had just emerged from a protracted strife, in which it had been almost annihilated, and there were then no established usages to control the habits of the people, to mark the limits of authority, or regulate the manner in which it should be exercised. The citizens, too, were singularly and often ridiculously jealous of every demonstration of official power, and were too much disposed to set up their own personal wills against the action of the constituted authorities. A mistaken idea of freedom of conscience had taken possession of many of their minds, and was adding its aid to native obstinacy and the spirit of faction, in producing results, both of opinion and conduct, disastrous to the peace and harmony of the colony.

The manner in which Mr. Williams administered the office of President, in this troubled state of public affairs, well illustrates his character, and furnishes a practical commentary upon his views of civil government, which have been so often misunderstood and misrepresented. He

was both conciliatory and firm; inclined to humor the prejudices of the people, so far as they were harmless, but never to sacrifice to their clamors any real interest of the community, or to shrink from the performance of any official duty, however much opposed to their will. His acts as a magistrate were commended to the colonists by the influence of his personal character, and the services he had rendered the state, so that his authority was seldom resisted or called in question, even amidst "the headiness and tumults" by which he was surrounded.

Soon after entering upon the duties of his presidency, an opportunity was presented for him again to interpose his kind offices in behalf of the Indians, whose interests and relations to the New England colonies never failed to occupy a considerable share of his attention. There was a prospect of hostilities again springing up between the United Colonies and some of the neighboring tribes, and he aimed to put a stop to the rising feud, and scatter the gathering clouds of war. For this purpose, he addressed a letter to the General Assembly of Massachusetts, in which he "humbly prays their consideration, whether it be not only possible, but very easy, to live and die in peace with all the natives of this country." He urges upon them a pacific policy, as the only one becoming a

Christian state, by appealing to their gratitude to the Indians, who had received them, and given them land, when their own countrymen had driven them away; to their regard for the honor of God, whose power had been displayed in the conversion of so many Indians to the Christian faith; to their horror of the sore calamities of war, and their veneration for the bright examples of peace, presented in the sacred Scriptures. Massachusetts, with a spirit that does honor to her early fathers, declared herself against the war, although it had been already determined on by the commissioners of the United Colonies, and the troops who had marched against the Indians returned to their homes, after a bloodless though by no means dishonorable campaign.*

During the early part of the presidency of Mr. Williams, one of the restless spirits, of whom so many were at this time congregated in Rhode Island, busied himself in circulating, among the citizens of Providence, a seditious tract against the authority of civil government, and maintaining that it was "contrary to the rule of the gospel to execute judgment upon transgressors against the private or public weal." This doctrine, springing up so naturally beneath the unrestricted freedom of opinion, which was then

* Hutchinson, Vol. I. p. 187.

enjoyed, was obviously, in its tendency, destructive of the very ends of society; yet, in the unsettled state of the colony, it was sure to find advocates and followers, some of whom, perhaps, might think it sanctioned by the principles of Roger Williams himself. Indeed, he was evidently inclined to the maxim, "the world is governed too much;" and his views of civil liberty would undoubtedly lead him to allow to every citizen the utmost degree of personal freedom, consistent with the order and well-being of society.

But of this freedom he perfectly understood the nature, and clearly distinguished the boundary line, which separates it from every form of licentiousness. Accordingly, when a doctrine so fatal to its true interests was avowed in the colony, he immediately set the whole weight of his influence and his authority to oppose it. Though holding the highest office to which the suffrages of the people could raise him, he did not wait to study the popular will, but boldly declared his abhorrence of "such infinite liberty of conscience," as was thus attempted to be set up. He addressed a letter to the town, setting forth the principles on which the state was founded, and denying, in the most explicit manner, that he had ever given the slightest sanction to these doctrines of lawless license. The letter itself is

a sufficient vindication of his fame from every suspicion of radicalism, and is, at the same time, an exposition of the doctrine of freedom of conscience, so full and so explicit as to leave nothing further to be desired for its illustration. The following is the letter as it is quoted by Mr. Knowles from the records of Providence.

"That I should ever speak or write a tittle, that tends to such infinite liberty of conscience, is a mistake, which I have ever disclaimed and abhorred. To prevent such mistakes, I at present shall only propose this case; There goes many a ship to sea, with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common, and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination or society. It hath fallen out sometimes, that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks, may be embarked in one ship; upon which supposal, I affirm that all the liberty of conscience, that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges; that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews, or Turks, be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship, or compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practise any. I further add, that I never denied, that, notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace, and sobriety be kept, and practised, both

among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their service, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help, in person or purse, towards the common charges or defence; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship, concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any shall preach or write that there ought to be no commanders or officers, because all are equal in Christ, therefore no masters or officers, no laws nor orders, no corrections nor punishments; I say, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander or commanders may judge, resist, compel, and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits. This, if seriously and honestly minded, may, if it so please the Father of Lights, let in some light to such as willingly shut not their eyes."

This letter of Mr. Williams, full and explicit as it is respecting the authority of government and the duty of citizens, did not entirely eradicate the impracticable and absurd notions of individual freedom, which were propagated by the turbulent spirits, that infested the colony. It is plain, that the principles of religious liberty were very imperfectly understood among the people at large, and that its name was con-

stantly liable to be used, among those who were impatient of restraint, as a pretext for their obstinate adherence to the absurd doctrines they had embraced.

The most troublesome manifestation of this spirit was found in the proceedings of William Harris, an influential inhabitant of Providence, who attempted to inflame the minds of the people a second time towards the constituted authorities, by sending to all the towns of the colony a violent and exciting pamphlet, which is described, in the language of Roger Williams, as being "against all earthly powers, Parliaments, laws, charters, magistrates, prisons, punishments, rates, yea, and against all Kings and Princes."* He subsequently declared, at a general meeting of the colony, that he was ready to maintain these doctrines with his blood. What action was taken by the magistrates of the colony, in relation to this extraordinary movement on the part of a leading citizen, cannot now be very clearly determined. It is plain, however, that Mr. Williams regarded it as partaking of the nature of treason against the authorities of England, as well as against those of the colony.

A letter, which he received from Crom-

* George Fox digged out of his Burrowes. Boston 1676. p. 20.

well soon after this affair, addressed to the "President, Assistants and Inhabitants of Rhode Island," directing them to take care of the peace and safety of the plantations, that there arise no detriment or dishonor to their commonwealth or themselves, served greatly to strengthen his authority, and to increase the respect of the people for the government. The General Assembly, in pursuance of the advice contained in the Protector's letter, immediately passed an act, declaring, that, "if any person or persons be found, by the examination and judgment of the General Court of Commissioners, to be a ringleader or ringleaders of factions or divisions among us, he or they shall be sent over, at his or their own charges, as prisoners, to receive his or their trial or sentence, at the pleasure of his Highness and the Lords of his Council." This judicious and timely action of the legislature, founded, as it was, on the recommendation of the Protector, exerted a salutary influence in promoting peace and good order among the people of the colony. Quiet reigned once more among the settlements. Mr. Harris, with others of the leading agitators, who had never been at rest since the restoration of the charter, were subdued by the prompt and resolute stand thus taken by the authorities, and gave in their allegiance to the colony, and cried up government

and magistrates as much as they had cried them down before.

This quiet, however, was only temporary. Mr. Harris, whose mind seems to have been inherently prone to the wildest extremes, did not utterly abandon the disorganizing doctrines he had formerly avowed. He repressed them for a time, but soon began to publish them again, probably with still greater peril to the peace and good order of the state; so that Mr. Williams, near the close of his presidency, entered a formal complaint against him, at the General Court of Commissioners, for high treason against the commonwealth. The seditious pamphlet was read in the hearing of the Court, together with Mr. Williams's accusation and Mr. Harris's reply, and the Court decided that he was guilty of maintaining, in substance, that any one who can say, "it is his conscience, ought not to yield subjection to any human order amongst men." The question whether this really amounted to treason, was very properly referred to the judgment of the authorities in the mother country, and the offender, in the mean time, was bound "in good bonds to his good behavior until their sentence be known."

These proceedings, sanctioned, as they were, by many of the principal citizens, seem to have alienated Mr. Harris from the interests of Prov-

idence, and to have been the commencement of a long and bitter quarrel between him and Mr. Williams. The hostile feelings of both parties were often expressed in the strongest terms, and the most public manner, and seem to have continued unabated to the end of life, affording a melancholy instance of the weakness of our nature, and the inadequacy even of common interests and common sufferings to keep in subjection the evil passions of the human heart. How far Mr. Williams deserves to be blamed, either at the commencement or in the prosecution of this controversy, cannot now be determined. Yet, in a personal quarrel so bitter and so protracted as this proved to be, it seldom happens that the wrong lies wholly on one side of the question. It is probable that he allowed his feelings too much to affect his official conduct, and that severity and personal animosity were, perhaps, insensibly blended with his discharge of the duty, which belonged to him as a magistrate and a citizen. Cromwell was at this time too busily occupied, in settling the affairs of his immediate government, to give much attention to the petty seditions of a distant colony, and no answer was ever returned to the question referred to him by the Court. The accusation brought against Harris was, accordingly, never prosecuted.

While holding the office of President, Mr. Williams also made a series of efforts to establish more amicable relations with the neighboring colonies, and particularly with Massachusetts. She still asserted her jurisdiction over the people at Pawtuxet, a portion of whom acknowledged her authority, and thus occasioned incessant trouble to the authorities at Providence. The policy, which, from the beginning, she had pursued towards the settlements of Rhode Island, had become more and more vexatious and injurious, as their population increased and their interests multiplied. She allowed unrestricted commerce between her citizens and the people of every part of New England, the Dutch at New York, and even, to a considerable extent, with several of the tribes of Indians; but to the inhabitants of the heterodox colony she prescribed conditions and limitations, which operated greatly to their disadvantage. Her laws forbade the people of Rhode Island from purchasing fire-arms or ammunition within her jurisdiction, and she had repeatedly refused to relax anything in their execution, even when solicited, in the midst of imminent peril from the Indians, who, taking advantage of the unprotected condition of the colony, and her alienation from the other settlements of New England, constantly threatened her with petty

annoyances, and sometimes even with fearful massacre.

In the hope of changing this oppressive policy, Mr. Williams, on the 15th of November, 1655, addressed a letter to "the General Court of magistrates and deputies assembled at Boston," in which he earnestly remonstrated against a system of legislation, which brought so many grievances in its train, and by which the people of Rhode Island "seemed to be devoted to the Indian shambles and massacres." After a few months, he wrote a letter to the Governor of Massachusetts, and received from him, in return, an invitation to visit Boston, that he might present his requests to the General Court in person. He accordingly prepared an address, which he presented to the Court in the name of his colony, in which he set forth the evils and oppressions which had been brought about by their cruel legislation. So earnest were his representations, and so unwearied was his perseverance, that he at length succeeded in wringing from the stern and reluctant magistrates of the Bay some of the favors, which he sought for his fellow-citizens. These he immediately acknowledged in a brief note to the Assembly, full of expressions of gratitude and faithfulness to their service.

This was the first time, since his banishment,

that he had entered the territory of Massachusetts by the permission of the authorities. On former occasions, when he had landed at Boston, on his return from England, he was protected by an order from the Council; and once, when he had gone thither to embark, he was subjected to insult and molestation, as one who bore the name of outlaw. The invitation to visit Boston, sent to him by Governor Endicott, was the beginning of more amicable relations; and, though his sentence of banishment was never formally revoked, yet his reception in Massachusetts seems to have been a practical disavowal, on the part of the authorities, of any intention longer to enforce its decree.

In July of the year 1656, the first Quakers arrived at Boston. Deeply tinctured with the fanaticism of the age, the early representatives of this sect appear to have held in equal contempt the authority alike of the church and the state, and their fortunes in New England are admirably fitted to illustrate the amazing contrast between the spirit that ruled in Rhode Island, and that which animated the people and controlled the legislation of all the other colonies. No sooner had these new heretics landed in Massachusetts, than the guardians of the colony set themselves to accomplish their utter extermination. They were at first severe-

ly punished under the general statutes against heresy. But, these proving ineffectual, the sternest enactments were proclaimed against them. Heavy fines were imposed on any, who should bring Quakers into the colony, who should import any of their books, attend their meetings, or defend any of their heretical opinions. The Quakers themselves were to be whipped with twenty stripes, and kept at hard labor until they could be transported from the colony. These laws were subsequently made still more severe. Every Quaker who should return, after having been once banished, if a man, was to lose one ear; if a woman, to be severely whipped; and, after the second return, both men and women were to have their tongues bored through with a red-hot iron. The same punishment was also to be inflicted upon every one, who should embrace their faith within the colony. The law was still ineffectual, and the "accursed and pernicious sect" increased in spite of all the efforts of the authorities to suppress them, until, in October, 1658, a law was enacted, banishing them on penalty of death in case they should return.

Similar laws, though generally not so severe, were also passed by the other colonies of New England; and the commissioners of these colonies employed every means of persuasion to

induce Rhode Island to join in the general persecution. They twice addressed the General Assembly on the subject, urging them to withhold from the Quakers the privileges of citizenship, and forbid them from taking up their residence within the jurisdiction. But the authorities of Rhode Island remained true to the principles on which their society was constituted. To both the communications, which were addressed to them, they returned a respectful but decided answer, that they had "no law whereby to punish any for only declaring by words their minds and understandings concerning the things and ways of God, as to salvation and an eternal condition." They also, at the same time, expressed their disapprobation of the doctrines of the Quakers, and their determination to require of them, as of all others who should come to their settlements, a strict performance of all civil duties; "and, in case they refuse it, to make use of the first opportunity to inform the agent of the colony residing in England."

The reply, however, was not satisfactory to the commissioners of the United Colonies, who appear to have been incensed at the firm and consistent policy pursued by the authorities of Rhode Island. The commissioners wrote a third time to the General Assembly, sternly threatening that the colony should be excluded from

all relations of intercourse and trade with the rest of New England, unless she immediately joined in their exertions to accomplish the extermination of the Quakers. But the threats of the commissioners were now as impotent as had been their arguments on former occasions. The colonists regarded with abhorrence these extraordinary attempts to drive them from their cherished principles, which had been distinctly recognized in their charter, and interwoven with all their legislation. Still, for the purpose of protecting themselves against the threats of their powerful and confederate neighbors, they determined to appeal to the government in England. The General Assembly, at a meeting held at Warwick, in November, 1658, appointed a committee to address a letter to Mr. Clarke, their agent at the court of the Protector, in which, after setting forth the measures which had been adopted by the other colonies, they formally appeal to his Highness and Council, that "they may not be compelled to exercise any civil power over men's consciences, so long as human orders, in point of civility, are not corrupted or violated."

Thus ended the controversy between the New England commissioners and the colony of Rhode Island, respecting the toleration of Quakers. It began near the close of the presidency of Mr.

Williams, and was, doubtless, sustained on the part of the colony, in a great degree, by his agency and advice. The mild and tolerant policy, which she adopted, was in accordance with the principles in which he had laid the foundations of the commonwealth, and which had been incorporated into all her early legislation. It contrasts, in the happiest and most impressive manner, with that which was adopted by the other colonies of New England, and furnishes the most satisfactory evidence, that, amidst all the controversial excitements and irregularities of the times, the people of Rhode Island still cherished the "soul liberty," in the maintenance of which they had encountered the perils and hardships of the wilderness. From this liberal policy the colony was never induced to depart; and her history, up to the present day, presents the rare, perhaps solitary instance of a state existing for more than two hundred years, whose statute-book contains not a single law abridging the freedom of the conscience, or in any manner interfering with religious opinion or worship.

CHAPTER XIV.

He retires from the Presidency. — Charles the Second grants a new Charter to the Colony. — Williams appointed an Assistant in the Government. — His Labors for the Indians. — His Controversy with the Quakers. — King Philip's War. — The Services of Williams during the War. — Its Results. — The Close of his Life, and his Death.

In the preceding chapter we have narrated the principal events of the troubled period during which Mr. Williams occupied the post of President, or Governor, of the colony of Rhode Island. He retired from the office in May, 1658, whether by a voluntary withdrawal, or by a failure to secure the suffrages of his fellow-citizens, we cannot now determine. His experience in the office seems to have awakened no desire to continue in it or return to it. He never again aspired to the place of chief magistrate, though he was, a few years afterwards, elected a deputy from Providence, and repeatedly sat as an assistant, or member of the upper house of the colonial Assembly. He was also intrusted, by his fellow-citizens of Providence, with all the higher offices of the town, and especially with the

performance of most of those public duties which required superior tact and wisdom. After this period, however, he seems never to have taken a very active part in the government of the colony, though he did not neglect any opportunity, which his intelligent assiduity could employ, for promoting its interests or advancing the peace and social well-being of its people.

From the year 1651, when John Clarke and Roger Williams were sent forth together in the service of the colony, Clarke himself had remained in England, the faithful and indefatigable agent of the people of Rhode Island. On the restoration of Charles the Second, in 1660, a new commission was sent to him, urging him to prosecute his agency with the utmost diligence at the court of the restored monarch, whose views, it was feared, might be unfriendly to the interests of a colony, which owed its charter to the Long Parliament. At length, on the 8th of July, 1663, after a residence in England of eleven years, he had the happiness of receiving from the King a new charter for the colony, instituting a government clothed with more perfect authority, and better suited to the condition of the people, and still recognizing in full the same principle of unlimited freedom "in matters of religious concernments," on which the colony had been originally founded. The

charter was brought to New England by Captain George Baxter, and was presented to the General Court of Commissioners at Newport, on the 24th of November, 1663, and, on the following day, was read in the presence of "a very great meeting and assembly of the freemen of the colony." It was received by the colonists with demonstrations of no common joy. The sum of one hundred pounds was voted to Mr. Clarke, their "trusty and well-beloved friend," and thirty pounds to "George Baxter, the most faithful and happy bringer of the charter." The ancient record glows with the animated scenes it describes. "The charter," says the record, "was taken forth from the precious box which held it, and was read by Baxter in the audience and view of all the people; and the letters, with his majesty's royal stamp and the broad seal, with much beseeming gravity, were held up on high, and presented to the perfect view of the people."*

In this instrument, the King, of his own authority, appointed the first Governor and assistants, who, according to its provisions, were to continue in office till the first Wednesday of May next ensuing. Benedict Arnold was cre-

* See Goddard's *Address on the Occasion of the Change in the Civil Government of Rhode Island.* p. 17

ated Governor, and Roger Williams one of the assistants; and at the first meeting of the General Assembly, under the new government, he was appointed to transcribe the charter into the permanent records of the colony. Immediately on the organization of the new government, the prospects of the colony began to brighten. New energy was infused into all its members. In the following May, at the first general election held by the people, Mr. Williams was chosen an assistant, and, in connection with Mr. Clarke, was appointed to make a revision of the laws, that their requirements might be better understood and more thoroughly enforced. He was also appointed one of the commissioners to run the eastern boundary of the colony, which had been the subject of a protracted dispute both with Plymouth and Massachusetts.

The General Assembly, at the same time, in virtue of the additional importance given to the colony by the grant of a free charter, began to put forth a more decided authority, and to declare its decrees in a more peremptory tone, respecting the disturbers of the public peace, who still infested the settlements at Warwick and Pawtuxet. Amidst these new and happy auspices, the Assembly ordered that the word Hope be inscribed over the anchor, which had already been adopted as the device of the colo-

nial seal, and the words "Rhode Island and Providence Plantations," the name given to the province in the new charter, be written around it, and that the same be henceforth the seal of the colony.

Such were the circumstances in which the second charter of Rhode Island went into operation. It was the freest charter, that ever bore the signature of a King, and was the astonishment of the age in which it was granted. Like that which preceded it, it secured the most perfect freedom in matters of conscience, and thus guarantied the perpetual exercise of the great principles on which the colony was founded. It continued to be the fundamental law of Rhode Island for nearly a hundred and eighty years, protecting the rights and securing the happiness of a long succession of generations, and "holding forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civil state may stand, and best be maintained, with a full liberty in religious concernments;" and when it was supplanted, in 1843, by the present constitution of the state, it is believed to have been the oldest charter of civil government in the world.

For a period of many years after the new organization of the government, but few memorials can now be found of either the public or the private life of Mr. Williams. As has been

already mentioned, he was a deputy or representative from Providence, in 1667, and was chosen assistant again in 1670 and the following year, and also in 1677; but in the last instance, he declined the office, probably on account of the infirmities of age. His name also frequently appears in the records of the town, as moderator of its meetings, as the leading manager of public business, and especially as a member of most of the committees that were appointed to draft public documents, to conduct negotiations with the Indians, or to settle the disputes and strifes that were perpetually springing up among the petulant burghers of that day, respecting the boundaries of their lands, or the limits of the town.

He had now passed the meridian of his life, and had reached a period, when a man may well sequester himself from public affairs, and, amid leisure and repose, meditate the changes through which he has passed, and prepare for the still greater change that awaits him. But, though sharing little in the perplexities and toils of the government, he did not become indifferent to its prosperity or fame. He even watched with parental care over its interests, and was the author and adviser of many of the public measures of the time, with which his name does not now stand connected. He seems also

to have been in the habit, during this more retired period of his life, of going once in a month to the Narragansett country, the neighborhood where, many years before, he had kept a trading-house, for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the Indians, and the scattered English in those parts. And at a later day, when he was no longer able to leave his fireside, he wrote to Governor Bradstreet, of Massachusetts, to consult how he might print the sermons he had thus preached, for the benefit of the natives.

Though his influence with the Indian tribes, and especially with the Narragansetts, was greater than that of any other person, yet he seems to have encountered nothing but difficulty and discouragement in his labors for their religious instruction. They were singularly averse to the reception of Christianity; and, though they would listen to the teachings of Mr. Williams from their respect for his character, yet the truths of the gospel found no easy access to their darkened understandings. Then, too, the amazing difficulty, with which spiritual ideas were expressed in their rude and singular language, in itself presented an obstacle almost insurmountable. He has himself declared how "hard it is for any man to attain a little propriety of their language in common things, so as to escape

derision among them, in many years, without abundant conversing with them, in eating, travelling, and lodging with them;" and refers for proof to John Eliot, who, though he had devoted his life to the study of their language and character, could not always make himself understood when he taught them the truths of religion. Cotton Mather says of the Indian words, that they must have been growing in length from the confusion of tongues at Babel, and Mr. Williams seems to have regarded the apostolic gift of tongues as alone adequate to the task of moulding their wild jargon into the clear expression of spiritual truth. His pious and generous-hearted labors, however, could not have been altogether in vain. He may have roused many a sluggish savage spirit to deep and earnest questioning of the mysteries of life, or planted the germs of virtue and piety in benighted minds, whose immortal destiny is known to God alone.

In the summer of 1672, Mr. Williams engaged in his famous controversy with the Quakers. Like most other controversies of the kind, it was a profitless war of words, and has attached to his memory an odium, which the motives that led him to engage in it are far from justifying. These motives he states to have been, first, the vindication of the name of God from the dis-

honor brought upon it by the Quakers; secondly, to justify the colony for receiving them when banished from the other colonies; thirdly, the hope that such a discussion would awaken "some soul-consideration" among the people, and thus save them from the errors he designed to expose.

The manners and modes of worship of the first advocates of the Quaker doctrines, who appeared in New England, were certainly sufficiently opposed to the purity of religion, and, in some instances at least, to the proprieties and decencies of civilized life. They excited the attention of the multitude by their noisy fervors, and sometimes wantonly provoked the persecutions they received. They scorned the ordinary courtesies of society, and gloried in rude manners and contemptuous expressions. The men would often insult the magistrates and ministers, as they passed their houses, and the women, laying aside the modesty of their sex, would run naked through the streets. Notwithstanding all this, they had been kindly received in Rhode Island, when driven from every other colony in New England, and were permitted to enjoy there every civil right and immunity, and, like all other citizens, to maintain undisturbed the peculiarities of their doctrine and worship. For this tolerant and truly magnanimous policy, this

clear-sighted deference to the supremacy of conscience, the fair fame of the colony had been traduced, and her citizens had been represented as fostering and approving all the errors, which her legislation had tolerated.

To the peculiar doctrines and practice of the early Quakers, Williams had always been strongly opposed. Though he never would allow them to be put down, or in any way molested, by the civil power, yet he regarded their notions as injurious to pure Christianity, and their conduct as pernicious to the morals and order of society. To declare his views respecting the prominent points of their belief, and to vindicate the colony from the aspersions which had been cast upon it for having received them to its jurisdiction, as we have seen, were among the motives which led him to engage in a controversy, which, though somewhat in accordance with the customs of that age, cannot now be regarded with approbation. In the month of July, 1672, he sent to George Fox, the distinguished founder of the sect, who was then at Newport, a formal challenge to a public discussion of fourteen propositions, into which he had drawn out his views. The challenge was in these words, and was addressed "To George Fox, or any other of my countrymen at Newport, who say they are the apostles and messengers of Christ Jesus. In

humble confidence of the help of the Most High, I offer to maintain, in public, against all comers, these fourteen propositions following, to wit; the first seven at Newport, and the other seven at Providence. For the time when, I refer it to George Fox and his friends at Newport." The propositions that accompanied the challenge affirmed, that the doctrines of the Quakers were unscriptural, and contrary to the well-being of society, and that, like Papacy, they tended to persecution, to rebellion, and to despotism. From some cause or other, they were not delivered to Fox, immediately on being sent to Newport, and he left the colony without having seen them. Mr. Williams always suspected, though on what grounds is not precisely known, that this was the result of a collusion between him and his friends, who wished him to avoid a public defence of his principles.

A discussion, however, was at length agreed upon, and was commenced at Newport, on the 9th of August. Mr. Williams was then in the seventy-third year of his age; yet was he able to row his boat, through a whole day, the distance of thirty miles, from Providence to Newport, where he arrived, as he says, "towards midnight, before the morning appointed." Three members of the sect, which he had come to assail, appeared as champions against him. Their

names were John Stubs, John Burnet, and William Edmundson. The two former he speaks of as able and learned men; the last, who was the chief speaker he characterizes as an ignorant and boisterous brawler. The debate began in the Quaker meeting-house, and lasted three days in Newport, and, on the 17th of the same month, was renewed at Providence, where it terminated after a single day, having produced no other effect than to exasperate the friends of both parties, and set them still more violently against each other.

That portion of the debate, especially, which was held in Newport, appears to have been a scene of tumult and confusion. The novel gladiatorship attracted a crowd of spectators; and, there being no moderator to preserve order and see fair play between the combatants, all took sides, and approved or condemned according to their varying tastes and opinions. Williams complains that he was often rudely interrupted; and when his brother Robert, at that time a schoolmaster in Newport, attempted to protect him from interruption, his interference was not allowed by the Quakers. Mr. Williams afterwards wrote out the discussion in full, which he published, together with an account of the motives that led to it, and the manner in which it was conducted. The book is entitled, "George

Fox digged out of his Burrowes; or, an Offer of Disputation on fourteen Proposals, made this last Summer, 1672, (so called,) unto G. Fox, then present on Rhode Island, in New England, by R. W.;" and, though displaying considerable learning, and a certain species of logical acuteness, is distinguished by a bitterness and severity of language unequalled in any other of his writings.

In the summer of 1675, the jealousies and hostilities, which had been so long gathering, in dark and threatening clouds, around the whole horizon of New England, broke out into a furious and desolating war. Philip, the able and ambitious chief of the Pokanokets, had aimed to establish a league among the tribes around him, that thus he might be able to punish what he conceived to be the wrongs of his race, and, if possible, gain back the lands they had lost, and drive the English from the country. Mr. Williams, as usual, in cases of trouble with the Indians, had been employed to allay the fury of Philip and his tribe, and had exerted himself to the utmost to prevent the still powerful Narragansetts from joining in the league. They at first promised neutrality, and renewed their treaty with the English; but the remembrance of their ancient power, and especially of the murder of their favorite chief, Miantonomo, was suf-

ficient to obliterate from their minds the obligations of their treaty, and even their dread of English arms. They joined themselves to Philip, and their four thousand warriors rushed to the combat, that soon extended to every part of New England. Town after town was burnt, and the war spread dismay and distress to the homes of every settlement of the English, and for a time seemed to threaten the annihilation of the colonies. Many of the people of Providence, and of the other towns of Rhode Island, removed to Newport, with their families.

Mr. Williams, however, remained at home, and was among the most active of the citizens in watching the movements of the foe, and preparing for their attack. Though his age was upwards of seventy-six years, yet he accepted a commission as captain in the militia of the colony, drilled the companies in Providence, and held them in constant readiness for active service. He also sent a petition to the town, for leave to convert one of the houses into a garrison, and to erect other defences "for security to women and children." The petition was granted, and the defences were raised entirely at private expense, for defraying which he subscribed the sum of ten pounds, by far the largest sum on the list of the subscriptions. At a subsequent period, the General Assembly established a garri-

son at Providence, and placed it under the command of Captain Fenner, with the express provision in the orders that were given him, that his authority should "not eclipse Captain Williams's power, in the exercise of the train-bands there."

In spite, however, of the preparations for defence, Providence shared the fate of so many other towns in New England. It was attacked by the Indians on the 29th of March, 1676; twenty-nine houses were reduced to ashes, and among them that in which the town records were kept. The records themselves were partially destroyed, and the remaining portions were saved only by being thrown into a pond, from which they were afterwards recovered. It is said, in the ancient traditions of Providence, that, when the Indians appeared on the heights north of the town, Mr. Williams took his staff, and went forth to meet them, hoping to turn away their vengeance, as he had often done before. But they were too much exasperated to yield to his influence. Some of the older chiefs, who had long known him, came towards him as they saw him approaching, and told him that they were his friends, but that their young men were too much enraged for him to venture among them with safety. He returned to the garrison, and witnessed the desolation of the town. This terrible war was at length brought to a close by

the death of King Philip, in August, 1676, but not till it had cost the colonies an immense expenditure both of treasure and blood. The disbursements and losses are said to have equalled half a million of dollars. Thirteen New England towns were entirely destroyed, and six hundred houses were burnt, and about six hundred of the colonists, or one in twenty of all the able-bodied men, were killed. There was mourning in every family, for every one had lost a kinsman or a friend.

But to the Indians the war was productive of still more terrible results. Hunted down and driven from their hiding-places by the persevering energy of their more civilized foes, their bravest chiefs all slain or taken captive, they presented, at its close, but a feeble remnant of the proud race, who had defied the vengeance of the white men. The Pokanokets were entirely exterminated, and the Narragansetts were so crippled and reduced, that scarcely a hundred of them returned to occupy the deserted lodges of the tribe. The rest had all perished by the sword, by fire, or by famine, or had been taken captive by their conquerors. The body of King Philip was treated with shameful indignity; his head was severed from his body, and exposed on a gibbet at Plymouth, and one of his hands

was sent to Boston. The Indians who were taken captive in the war, including the son of King Philip, the last of the race of Massasoit, were sold into slavery, either among the colonists at home, or in the Island of Bermuda. The captives, who were brought to Providence, were distributed among the heads of families on the following conditions, viz., "*All under five years to serve till thirty; above five, and under ten, till twenty-eight; above ten, to fifteen, till twenty-seven; above fifteen, to twenty, till twenty-six years; from twenty to thirty, shall serve eight years; all above thirty, seven years.*" These conditions were recommended by a committee appointed by the town to report a plan for the disposal of the captive Indians; and, though the slavery to which they were reduced hardly involved the idea of absolute property in their persons, yet it is with pain and disappointment that we read the name of Roger Williams first among the committee who sanctioned them. Thus ended the history of the race he had so often befriended; and he may have regarded their servitude as the only condition compatible with the peace and safety of the colonies of New England. His hopes of their civilization and improvement were well nigh extinguished by the melancholy doom which settled around them,

and which seems to be the inevitable fate of every savage race, when brought into collision with the arts and arms of civilized man.

Mr. Williams's life was now rapidly declining amid the shadows of evening, and but few more events remain to be recorded in its checkered history. Old age, however, to him was not a season of quiet and repose. He had devoted his life to the maintenance of one great principle; and, though he had seen it embodied and carried into operation in the civil community around him, yet the principle was still a despised and persecuted one, and was regarded, even by the best and wisest men of New England, as the dream of enthusiasm. Its permanent triumph was yet to be secured. This made him exceedingly sensitive to any abuse of the freedom of conscience, which sprang up among the people of the colony. He was disquieted at their strifes and discords, and was constantly engaged in endeavoring to settle the questions that gave rise to them. After the close of the war, he seems still to have continued his monthly visits to Narragansett, for the purpose of preaching to the English and the Indians, who dwelt there.

In May, 1677, he was again chosen an assistant, but did not accept the office. In January, 1681, he presented to the town a paper entitled

"Considerations touching Rates," containing a series of maxims demonstrating the necessity of civil government, and the duty of every citizen to share in the burdens it imposes. The fact, that such considerations were needed, shows that the community, of which he was the founder, was still disturbed by those lawless and self-willed men, who are willing to enjoy all the blessings of regulated society, but shrink from every sacrifice it demands, and every labor it enjoins. With such men as these he had to contend as long as he lived; and the latest recorded act of his life was to affix his signature to a document, which was intended to settle the long-protracted controversy respecting that most prolific subject of disputes, the Pawtuxet lands. This document bears the date of January 16th, 1683, and is the last that remains of the waymarks along the journey of his life. The precise time of his death is nowhere mentioned. It must have occurred in the early part of the year 1683; for a letter written from Providence on the 10th of May, by Mr. John Thornton to the Reverend Samuel Hubbard, makes the following mention of his death; "The Lord hath arrested by death our ancient and approved friend, Mr. Roger Williams, with divers others here."

This is the only record that can now be

found of the death of the venerable founder of Rhode Island. He was in the eighty-fourth year of his age; and, though weakened by physical infirmities, yet he seems to have possessed to the last the full vigor of his intellectual faculties. He was buried at Providence, on the spot which he had selected as the burial-place of his family, with appropriate funeral honors, "and with all the solemnity the colony was able to show."* Though, like most of the early colonists, he lived to an age far beyond the ordinary lot of man, yet his wife, and all his children, are believed to have survived him.

CHAPTER XV.

His religious Opinions. — His Views respecting the Clergy. — Political Opinions. — Character as a Writer. — General Remarks.

In the preceding pages we have purposely avoided any account of the change in religious opinions, if such it deserves to be called, which has rendered the subject of this sketch so cele-

---

* Callender, Elton's edition, p. 147, note.

brated in the ecclesiastical annals of New England. Unfortunately, though much has been written, but little can now be known respecting it. As we have already stated, he received his ordination, as a minister of the gospel, from the hands of an Episcopal bishop of the established church in England, and, before leaving that country, was settled as a parish preacher. After his arrival in Massachusetts, like most of the other Puritan divines, he adopted the Congregational mode of worship and form of church government; and though, while there, he was charged with holding opinions "tending to Anabaptistry," as it was called, yet the charge is supposed to have related to his principles of religious liberty, which were considered dangerous and disorganizing, rather than to an adoption of the sentiments of the Baptists. The validity of infant baptism, and, indeed, of any baptism by sprinkling, was, at that period, just beginning to be called in question, among the Puritans, by here and there an inquiring spirit; and Roger Williams, though not the first to embrace the new opinions, yet, with his characteristic independence, was the first in New England to carry them out into practice. We know nothing of the reasons which led him to the step. We only know that he became convinced that his early baptism was invalid, and

was baptized by immersion, according to the usage of the Baptists, in March, 1639, by Ezekiel Holliman, a respectable citizen of Providence. He subsequently administered the ordinance to Mr. Holliman, and to others of the settlers there, who immediately united in forming the First Baptist Church in that town, which was also the first of that persuasion upon this continent.

But the doubt, which had been once awakened respecting the tenets of his early faith, unfortunately did not end with discarding his baptism when an infant. He soon became dissatisfied with other institutions of the church, and especially doubted the apostolic authority of all the orders of the clergy then existing. This led him still further to distrust, and ultimately to reject, not only his own baptism, but all baptism whatever, "because not derived from the authority of the apostles, otherwise than by the ministers of England, whom he judged to be ill authority." * For these reasons, though, it appears, in a manner perfectly amicable, he left the church, which he had aided in forming, a few months after its organization, and became what, in the history of New England, is denom-

* This is the language of Governor Winthrop, and with this view the writings of Williams agree.

inated a *Seeker;* a term not inaptly applied to those, who, in any age of the church, become dissatisfied with its prevailing creeds and institutions, and seek for more congenial views of truth, or a faith better adapted to their spiritual wants. He regarded all the churches of Christendom as, in some sense, in a state of apostasy, and the clergy, of every name, as having fallen from their priestly office, and lost their true apostolic authority; and he looked for a new commission to be given from Heaven, to restore the sacred succession of apostles, and rëestablish, on their primitive basis, the ordinances of the gospel.

His singular views on this subject are set forth at length in his writings, especially in his "Hireling Ministry none of Christ's." One of the propositions maintained in this work is, that "the apostolical commission and ministry is long since interrupted and discontinued. Yet, ever since the beast Antichrist arose, the Lord hath stirred up the ministry of prophecy, who must continue their witness and prophecy, until their witness be finished, and slaughters, probably, near approaching, be accomplished." This ministry of witnesses and prophets he recognized as the only one now extant. He allowed to them the right to bear witness to the truth, and to vindicate it from the attacks of all who should assail

it; but he denied their authority to rule the church, or to administer the ordinances of religion.

These views respecting the ministry were, probably, to a considerable extent at least, the result of his own unfortunate experience with the clergy of his time, both in England and America. He saw them, even in these most favored parts of Christendom, sanctioning the use of the civil sword, in maintaining the purity of the church, and in extending the triumphs of the gospel. He had himself suffered from their bitter denunciations, and had been a witness of their zeal for persecution; and, as he compared their practice with the qualities most insisted on in the sacred Scriptures, it is not strange that, with his views of the sanctity of conscience, he should be disposed to question their apostolic character and authority.

These opinions, however, extraordinary as they now appear, did not abate an iota his interest in religious truth, or in the conversion of others to the Christian faith. With a zeal which never tired till near the close of a long life, "by many tedious journeys," he constantly labored for the religious good of the ignorant and the destitute around him; and when too old to preach any longer, we find him by his fireside, striving to recollect the heads of his numerous

discourses, that he might print them for the benefit of the Narrangansett Indians and others. For this purpose, he was obliged to apply to his friends for aid; and, too poor himself to promise payment, he appeals to a nobler motive, and says that "he who hath a shilling, and a heart to countenance and promote such a soul-work, may trust the great Paymaster for an hundred for one in this life." *

Still less did his peculiar views respecting the institutions and outward observances of religion diminish his faith in the fundamental principles of morals. In every sphere of life in which he moved; in the controversies in which he was engaged; in all his commerce with both civilized and barbarous men, he everywhere recognized them as matters of unchanging obligation. His adherence to what he regarded as the dictates of truth and justice, his generous respect for the rights of the Indians, and his philanthropic interest in their improvement, and conversion to Christianity, separate him from the great majority of the founders of states, and place him, in all the relations of equity and peace, by the side of the noble-minded William Penn. Even his worst enemies have never breathed a reproach upon his morals. Cotton Mather, who says, in

* Letter to Governor Bradstreet.

his quaint folly, that he had a windmill in his head, yet admits that he had *the root of the matter* in his heart; while his friends, from a nearer observation of his virtues, pronounce him to have been "one of the most disinterested men that ever lived; a most pious and heavenly-minded soul." *

The record of his life, and of the labors in which he was engaged, is perhaps the best delineation of his character. Of its minuter personal traits it may now be difficult to form any distinct conception. Its leading features appear to have had their origin in his steadfast love of truth, and his boldness and independence in declaring it. It may have been wanting in the graces and accomplishments, which cultivated life alone can impart; but it was still radiant with some of the noblest and most commanding qualities of humanity. His faults were such as generally spring from an ardent and excitable temperament. He was sometimes hasty and rash in forming his opinions, and too unyielding and uncompromising in maintaining them. But that he was also magnanimous and benevolent, patient of suffering and forgiving of injuries, and unwavering in his devotion to the interests of truth, and liberty, and virtue, his whole life bears

* Callender, p. 72.

constant testimony. He could not be a time-server or a parasite. He could fawn neither at the footstool of power nor at the tribunal of public opinion. He was true to the promptings of his own moral nature, and he followed them, with reverence, whithersoever they led him.

His political opinions were, in the main, those of the Puritans and the Independents; though he stopped far short of the extremes to which some of the leaders of the popular party pushed their principles, in the fierce contests of that revolutionary age. On but few of the great questions, which then agitated England, has he left any expression of his opinion. The scenes of his life were too remote and too humble to render it necessary, or even possible, for him to take any decided stand in the general politics of the day. But, though sympathizing strongly with the popular party, and on terms of friendly intimacy with many of its most eminent leaders, yet he could not sanction some of its measures; and, amid all the changes in the government, he never withheld his allegiance from the constituted authorities of the realm, whether Parliament, Protector, or King. He has declared, in one of his writings, his disapprobation of the execution of Charles the First, and seems seriously to have doubted whether it would not have been better to suffer all the evils of tyr-

anny, rather than plunge the nation into the calamities of the civil wars.

His industry in every enterprise which he undertook was indefatigable. His life was one long season of incessant work, and this in nearly every sphere of exertion which the times presented. He placed the highest estimate upon the value of time. "One grain of its inestimable sand," says he, "is worth a golden mountain;" and it was only in the spirit of such a maxim, that he could have accomplished so much, both of intellectual and physical labor, in the unpropitious circumstances in which he was placed. His knowledge, especially in history and theology, appears to have been extensive, and his scholarship in the classic languages unusually varied and exact. As a writer, he had little time, and, it may be, little taste for the elegances of language. His style, however, is usually earnest and forcible, and sometimes sparkles with animating beauty, though it more generally rolls roughly along through sentences involved and wearisome from their want of clearness and harmony. But when we reflect, that much of his time was spent away from cultivated society, in providing for the mere physical necessities of life, amid the depressions of poverty, and the hardships of an infant settlement, as he himself describes it, "at the hoe and at the oar for

bread," our wonder is, that he was able to write so much, and especially to write so well; and we pardon the rudeness of his style, as we think of the noble principles of spiritual freedom it embodies, and of the toils and sufferings he endured in making them familiar to mankind.

But it is not upon his writings that the fame of Roger Williams most depends, or that his claims to the respect and gratitude of the world principally rest. His name, especially in this country, has long since become identified with the great principle of political philosophy, which he spent the greater part of his life, and his best energies, in supporting and carrying into practice. This principle of the supremacy of conscience, the underived independence of the soul, now so familiar and well understood, was, in the age in which he lived, a startling paradox, and, in the judgment of his contemporaries, prolific only of evils both to the church and the state. He alone conceived it in its true import and application, and he fearlessly announced it as an elemental truth in morals. Starting with the great doctrines of the reformation, the right of private judgment, and man's accountability to God alone for his religious faith and worship, he demonstrated his sublime principle. To set it forth, to vindicate it from the persecutions with which it was assailed, to

rescue it from the selfish ends to which it was perverted, this was the noble mission of his life, to which he sacrificed comfort and ease, and all his hopes of worldly preferment. In the pursuit of this end he never wavered. In public and in private life, as a minister and a legislator, amid the rudeness and penury of his plantation in the wilderness, or in the society of scholars and statesmen in the mother country, he kept it constantly in view, as the radiant pole-star of his hopes and aims.

His days were passed amid the obscurity of a New England settlement, a sphere too narrow and humble to call out the full energies of his character. Had he returned, like Sir Henry Vane, to England, he might have asserted his noble principles on the floor of the British Parliament, or uttered them at the Board of the Council of State. His influence could not fail to be felt, and his name might have stood, on the page of English history, among the brightest and best of the republican statesmen of the time. But he was reserved for a less conspicuous, though scarcely an humbler destiny, to become the founder of a state in the American confederacy, and the first advocate, in modern Christendom, of the entire freedom of conscience. The truths for whose sake he was persecuted and banished, and which he toiled so long to es-

tablish, have become incorporated into our whole social system, and, like many of the most useful arts, from their very commonness and familiarity, have now ceased to remind us of their original discoverer and advocate. But he, who analyzes our American civilization, and traces the influences that now control it back to the sources whence they sprang, will not fail to appreciate the character, and do honor to the name, of Roger Williams.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Charges against Rhode Island.

Two several charges have been brought against Rhode Island, for having trespassed upon the principles of religious liberty in which she was originally founded. The first is contained in Chalmers's "Political Annals," Book I. Chap. XI. pp. 276–279. He states, that, at the meeting of the General Assembly, in March, 1664, a law was passed, containing the following passage; viz., "That all men *professing Christianity*, of competent estates, and of civil conversation, who acknowledge and are obedient to the civil magistrates, though of different judgments in religious affairs, *Roman Catholics only excepted*, shall be admitted freemen, or may choose or be chosen colonial officers." A statute, containing the passage above quoted, is found in the edition of the "Laws of Rhode Island," which was printed in 1745, the earliest edition, of which any copies are now extant. But it is certain, that no law containing the clauses written in Italics, was passed in 1664; nor can such a law now be found at all in the records

of the colony. The late Honorable Samuel Eddy, who was Secretary of State, in Rhode Island, from 1797 to 1819, and who examined the records with the utmost care, and with reference to this very exclusion, states that he found nothing relating to it, "nor anything that gives any preference or privileges to men of one set of religious opinions over those of another."

The words printed in Italics are now generally regarded as an interpolation, and are supposed to have been inserted, at a date long subsequent to 1664, by some committee for the revisal of the early laws, or by some friend of the colony, who thus sought to rescue its reputation, in England, from the odium which might have been attached to the toleration of Roman Catholics, and those who were not Christians. This supposition is rendered in a high degree probable, by the considerations, that such an exclusion conflicts with the principles of Roger Williams, and with the whole spirit of both the charters and all the early legislation of the colony; that no such exclusion was ever carried into effect in the colony; and, lastly, that the identical law, the excluding clauses being removed, was actually passed by the General Assembly, in 1664, in which Roger Williams sat as an assistant, or member of the upper house. For the views of Mr. Eddy, drawn out in full, see Walsh's "Appeal," pp. 427 – 435.

The other charge is contained in an article signed Francis Brinley, (Massachusetts Historical Collections, Vol. V.,) which asserts, that, in 1665, the Quakers were outlawed for refusing to bear arms

This statement, however, turns out to be as destitute of truth as the preceding. The origin of the charge is explained, and its falsity clearly pointed out, in an article, also from the pen of Mr. Eddy, contained in the Mass. Hist. Coll. 2d Series, Vol. VII. p. 97. From this article it appears, that, in 1665, the commissioners of the colonies, in the name of the King, ordered that all householders, inhabiting the colony of Rhode Island, should take the oath of allegiance. The General Assembly, however, replied that it had always been the practice of the colony, out of respect to the rights of conscience, to allow those, who objected to the taking of an oath, to make a solemn asseveration, on the penalties of perjury. An engagement was accordingly drawn up, which, in obedience to the authority of the King, the inhabitants of the colony were required to take, or lose their privileges as freemen. By the terms of the engagement, the individual promised to bear allegiance to the King and his successors, and "to yield due obedience to the laws established from time to time." To this latter clause the Quakers took exception, because it would require them to comply with the militia laws then in being. They refused to take the engagement, and were accordingly disfranchised; a result which formed no necessary part of the purposes of the law, and which is to be ascribed rather to the order of the commissioners, than to the action of the legislature. The form of the engagement was altered the next year, on purpose to suit the scruples of the Quakers.

Such is the manner in which these charges, brought

against the fidelity of Rhode Island to the principles of her founder, have been answered and refuted, by a gentleman who was perfectly acquainted with the spirit of her institutions and the history of her legislation.

No. II.

Account of Roger Williams's Writings.

The titles of but few of the writings of Roger Williams have found their way into any of the larger bibliographical works of our language. Many of them are, consequently, now exceedingly rare, and seldom accessible to the general reader. On this account, the following description of those, which are known to exist, is presented to the attention of readers who may be curious in such things.

I. His earliest published work bears the following title; "A Key into the Language of America, or an Help to the Language of the Natives in that Part of America called New England; together with briefe Observations of the Customs, Manners, and Worships, &c., of the aforesaid Natives, in Peace and Warre, in Life and Death. On all which are added spiritual Observations, generall and particular, by the Author, of chiefe and special Use (upon all Occasions) to all the English inhabiting those Parts; yet pleasant and prof-

itable to the View of all Men. By Roger Williams, of Providence, in New England. London, printed by Gregory Dexter, 1643."

This work was written while at sea, on his first voyage to England, in the summer of 1643, as a help to his own memory, that he might not lightly lose what he "had so dearly bought by hardship and charges among the barbarians." It comprises one hundred and ninety-seven pages of small duodecimo, and is dedicated to his "well-beloved countrymen in Old and New England." It is divided into thirty-two chapters, each of which is devoted to some subject connected with the manners and character of the Indians, and contains specimens of the principal words in their language which relate to that subject. Each chapter, also, closes with pious reflections, and a few verses, which compare very well with productions of most of the New England bards of that day. The "Key" is by far the best known of Mr. Williams's works, and is still of the highest authority respecting the subject of which it treats. A few copies of the original edition still remain, and are occasionally noticed in the catalogues. The greater part of the work has been republished in the third and fifth volumes of the Massachusetts Historical Society's Collections. It is also contained entire in the first volume of the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. A copy of the original edition is in the library of Harvard College.

II. The second work which Mr. Williams published is entitled, "Mr. Cotton's Letter, lately printed, Examined and Answered. By Roger Williams, of

Providence, in New England. London, imprinted in the year 1644." It is a small quarto, of forty-seven pages, preceded by an address, of two pages, to "The Impartiall Reader." From this address, it appears that, soon after the banishment of Williams, Mr. Cotton sent him a letter, in which he vindicates the act of the magistrates in sending him away, though he denies that he had any agency in procuring it. The letter also states the opinions of Mr. Williams, which led to his banishment, and points out "the sandiness of the grounds" on which they rested. Of this letter, the work above mentioned contains a full examination and refutation. Its tone is highly courteous, and the dilemmas in which it often places Mr. Cotton show the clearness, with which Mr. Williams had conceived his opinions, and "the rocky strength of the grounds" on which he planted them. The work is now exceedingly rare. The copy I have examined is in the possession of the family of the late Moses Brown, of Providence. There is also a copy, somewhat mutilated, in the library of Yale College.

III. His next publication is entitled, "The Bloody Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience, discussed, in a Conference between Truth and Peace, who, in all tender Affection, present to the High Court of Parliament (as the Result of their Discourse) these (amongst other Passages) of highest consideration." It was printed in London, in 1644, without the name either of the writer or the publisher, and comprises two hundred and forty-seven pages, of small quarto. In the library of Brown University are two copies of the work, which appear to

be of separate editions, though both printed within the same year. There is a slight difference in the type and orthography of the title-page, and of the captions of some of the chapters. The earlier copy also contains a list of *errata* at the end, which are corrected in the later edition. In all other respects the two copies are precisely alike.

The singular origin of the work well illustrates the spirit of the times. A person, who had been confined in Newgate for opinion's sake, wrote a letter against the use of the civil power in cases of conscience. The letter was written with milk, on sheets of paper brought to the prison by stealth, as stoppers to the milk-bottle. After its publication, it was sent to Mr. Cotton, of Boston, who wrote an answer to the views it contained. This answer to what was thus written in milk, in support of the mild and benignant doctrines of toleration, is represented as written in blood, and is hence styled by Williams "The Bloody Tenent." Both the letter from Newgate and the answer of Mr. Cotton are printed in the work, and form the basis of the dialogue between Truth and Peace. The whole is prefaced by a Dedication to the "Right Honorable, both Houses of the High Court of Parliament," and by an "Address to every Courteous Reader." The work was written during the author's first visit to England, and though, as he says, prepared for the public "in change of rooms and corners, yea, sometimes, in variety of strange houses, sometimes in the fields in the midst of travel," it is yet the best written of all his works, and sets forth his doctrines of religious freedom very fully, and in a

style always animated, and sometimes highly beautiful. It has never been republished, and copies are now seldom offered for sale, though, when offered, they always command a high price. There is a copy of this work in the library of Harvard College.

Mr. Cotton wrote a reply to this work, which was published in 1647, and was entitled, "The Bloody Tenet Washed and made White in the Blood of the Lamb, being discussed and discharged of Blood-guiltyness, by just Defence." The author contended for the right and the duty of the civil magistrate to punish for errors of doctrine, and endeavored to vindicate the practice at that time so prevalent among the settlements of the Puritans.

IV. Mr. Williams's fourth publication was a rejoinder to this work of Mr. Cotton's. It has the following title-page, which is sufficiently descriptive of its contents; "The Bloody Tenent yet more Bloody, by Mr. Cotton's Endeavor to wash it white in the Blood of the Lambe, of whose precious Blood spilt in the Blood of his Servants, and of the Blood of Millions spilt in former and later Wars for Conscience' Sake, that most Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience, upon a second Tryal, is now found more apparently, and more notoriously guilty. In this Rejoynder to Mr. Cotton are principally, 1. The Nature of Persecution; 2. The Power of the Civill Sword in Spiritualls examined; 3. The Parliament's Permission of dissenting Consciences justified. Also (as a Testimony to Mr. Clarke's Narrative) is added a Letter to Mr. Endicott, Governor of the Massachusetts, in N. E. By R. Williams, of Providence, in

New England. London, printed for Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the Black Spread Eagle, at the West End of Paul's, 1652." It is a small quarto, and, including the letter to Governor Endicott, and an appendix to the clergy of Old and New England, Scotland, and Ireland, comprises three hundred and twenty pages. This work discusses the same great questions as the preceding, and maintains the same views, with additional arguments. Both are pervaded with a mildness quite unusual in the controversial writings of that day, and are enriched with an amount of learning that does credit to the varied scholarship of their author. This second work is believed to be even more rare than the first. There are two copies in the library of Brown University, one of which is the presentation copy, which Mr. Williams gave to his friend and fellow-laborer in the service of the colony, Dr. John Clarke. It contains the following inscription, in his own hand-writing; "For his honored and beloved Mr. John Clarke, an eminent witness of Christ Jesus ag'st ye bloodie Doctrine of Persecution, &c." There is likewise a copy in the library of Harvard College.

V. In the same year, in which he wrote the Rejoinder to Mr. Cotton, and while he was on his second visit to England, he also wrote and published another treatise on the same general subject as the two preceding. It is entitled, "The Hireling Ministry None of Christ's, or a Discourse touching the Propagating the Gospel of Christ Jesus; Humbly presented to such Pious and Honorable Hands, whom the present Debate thereof concerns. By Roger Wil-

liams, of Providence, in New England. London, printed in the Second Month, 1652." This book is also a small quarto, of thirty-six pages. It is, in reality, an argument against an established church, and the support of the clergy by law, and not, as its title would now seem to import, against the pecuniary compensation of ministers of the gospel. It is a sort of supplement to his other writings on religious liberty, in which he explains his singular views respecting the ministry, and earnestly contends for the right of "all the people of the three nations to choose and maintain what worship and ministry their souls and consciences are persuaded of." Only two copies of this work are known now to exist in this country, and these are both in the library of the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester. One of them has been lent to the writer, by the courtesy of the directors of that institution.

VI. He is also said to have published, during the same year, while residing in England, another small volume, entitled, "Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health, and their Preservatives. London, 1652." I am not aware that any copy of this work now exists in this country, nor is there any account given of it in any of the ordinary works of bibliography.

VII. The last of Roger Williams's published writings is the account of the controversy he had with the Quakers. It was printed at Boston, in 1676, and bears the following title: "George Fox digg'd out of his Burrowes, or an Offer of Disputation, on fourteen Proposalls made this last Summer, 1672, (so call'd,) unto G. Fox, then present on Rode

Island, in New England, by R. W. As also how (G. Fox slily departing,) the Disputation went on, being managed three Dayes at Newport on Rode Island, and one Day at Providence, between John Stubbs, John Burnet, and William Edmundson, on the one Part, and R. W. on the other. In which many Quotations out of G. Fox and Ed. Burrowes Book in Folio are alleadged. With an Appendix, of some Scores of G. F., his simple lame Answers to his Opposites in that Book quoted and replyed to, By R. W. of Providence in N. E. Boston, printed by John Foster, 1676."

The book derives its quaint title from the accidental combination of the names Fox and Burrowes in the work, which had been written in defence of the Quakers. It also contains a number of similar puns upon these names, scattered through the discussion. Like most of his other writings, it is in small quarto, and comprises, in all, three hundred and twenty-seven pages, of which two hundred and eight are devoted to an account of the controversy, and one hundred and nineteen to the Appendix. It is dedicated to "The King's Majesty, Charles II.," and commences with two prefatory addresses, one to "The People called Quakers," and the other "To those many Learned and Pious Men, whom G. Fox hath so sillily and scornfully answered in his Book in Folio. Especially to those whose Names I have been bold to mention in the Narrative and Appendix, Mr. Richard Baxter, Mr. John Owen, &c."

Though written at a late period of life, when, in most men, the fires of passion have burned out, it is yet the most violent and denunciatory of all his wri-

tings. The manner in which the discussion at Newport was managed was exceedingly irritating and harassing, and the recollection of this seems to have remained in his mind, and to have infused its bitterness into the narrative in which he has embodied his arguments. The book has never been republished. A copy of it is contained in the library of Harvard College.

Roger Williams appears to have written several other works, which either were never published, or have long since perished. Among these was the Treatise he wrote while at Plymouth, respecting the patent granted by King James to the New England colonies. This was the book which occasioned him so much trouble during his second residence at Salem. There is no reason to believe that it was ever published. In his "Key to the Indian Languages," he speaks of having "further treated of the natives of New England, and that great point of their conversion, in an additional Discourse." This Treatise, which may have been printed, has probably perished No trace of it can now be found. He also, near the close of his life, prepared for publication a volume of the sermons he had preached at Narragansett, and wrote to Governor Bradstreet to solicit aid in printing it. The volume, however, seems never to have gone to the press.

I have thus mentioned all the works of Roger Williams, which are now known to be extant, or of which any account has been preserved. They were regarded with little favor, on this side of the Atlantic, at the time of their publication, on account of

the general hostility of the Puritans to his doctrines of religious freedom, and to the interests of the colony which he founded. Most of them were originally printed in London, and it is not improbable that many more copies of them all may now be found in Great Britain than in this country. It is to be hoped, however, that, of the few that remain, a complete set may yet be collected for some one of the public libraries of Rhode Island.

In addition to those works, which were prepared specially for publication, there is a large number of letters and documents relating to both public and private affairs. Many of these have been published in the early volumes of the Massachusetts Historical Collections, and also in Mr. Knowles's Memoir. Others are scattered about in the possession of individuals, or in places of public deposit. Of the published letters, that written, in 1670, to Major Mason, of Connecticut, is by far the most interesting and valuable, and contains the fullest account, which he has left on record, of the period of his banishment, and his planting the settlement at Providence. No one can read it without admiring the simplicity of the narrative, or without feeling a lively sympathy for the perils he encountered, and the sufferings he endured.

Date Due

GTU Library
3 2400 00683 5874

/RN
-75
B

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649 2500
All items are subject to recall